The POCKET GUIDE to FISHING KNOTS

PETER OWEN

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PETER OWEN
FOREWORD BY CHARLES JARDINE

STEP-BY-STEP ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER OWEN
ADDITIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER MASSEY

Merlin Unwin Books

For those two fine piscators
Sutcliffe and Peachey

The author would like to thank Philip Parkinson at Sportfish UK for his help with the knot-tying tools, connectors, and other accessories.

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FOREWORD

A blur of hands, a perfunctory tug, a fly speeding toward its target, an underwater ‘ping’. A fish lost through knot failure.

How many times has it happened to you? Isn’t it strange that, given the thousands of words on baits, fly patterns, tackle, techniques, and the fish themselves, that the vital link between us and the quarry – the not-so-humble knot – is probably the least written about or explored area in our pursuit. When you think about it, it’s crazy.

That’s why anyone interested in catching (as opposed losing) fish should read this book. A good sound knot is every bit as important as the line or lure you select. Knowing which knot to tie in certain circumstances can lead to epic catches. Then there is the importance of knowing which link will hinge or stay static; one or the other may just make the difference that day. So remember, whether you are tangling with a ton-up tarpon or tricking a little brown trout, the knot matters. This book will show you the right one – and how to tie it properly.

Charles Jardine

INTRODUCTION

The tackle of today's fisherman is usually made up of several high-tech components, and typically, the only elements the fisherman provides are the knots. The knots are a vital link in the system: a faulty or incorrectly tied knot will instantly become the 'weak link' – and it is always the weak link that snaps first. This demonstrates how important knots are to the fisherman.

Knots have always played an important part in the development of angling, and through this process many knots and their variations have emerged. This book illustrates and describes twenty-four of these knots that have stood the test of time and become proven favourites.

For some people, especially those whose fingers are not as nimble as they used to be or whose eyesight is no longer perfect, tying knots can be a difficult task. This difficulty can be further increased if you are trying to tie knots on a cold riverbank in half light with a gale-force wind blowing. So this book also illustrates and describes a selection of knot-tying tools and other line connectors, all designed to help you maximise your tackle performance and eliminate the possibility of a weak link.

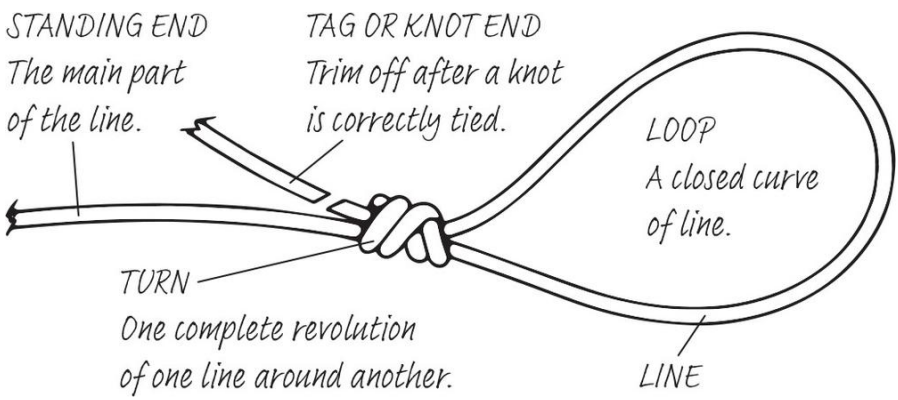
How to Use This Book

The step-by-step illustrations that accompany the descriptions of the knots are intended to be self-explanatory, with captions provided where necessary to convey additional information.

The illustrations are precise, so follow them exactly – reversing or changing the order could result in a defective knot. The number of turns recommended for certain knots are only recommendations. Different lines of different quality may require slight variations.

A simple way to test knots is to tie each knot in a separate length of line. Ask a friend to hold the ends with a pair of pliers or secure the lines to a post. Then, using a pair of gloves to protect your hands, pull evenly on the other end of the lines. If you vary your pulls between a steady and jerking action you will be able to determine which knot is stronger under different types of strain.

Fishing Knot Terms

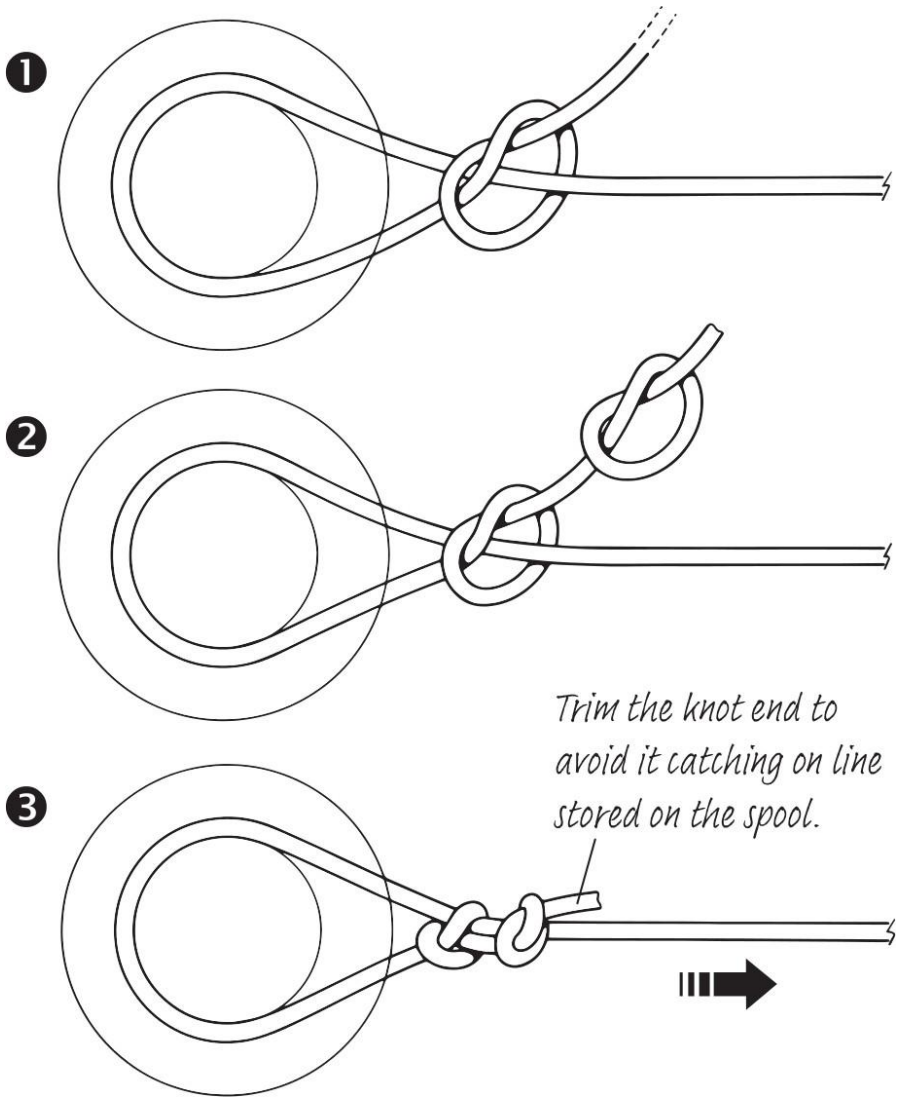

STANDING END
The main part of the line.
TAG OR KNOT END
Trim off after a knot is correctly tied.
LOOP
A closed curve of line.
TURN
One complete revolution of one line around another.
LINE

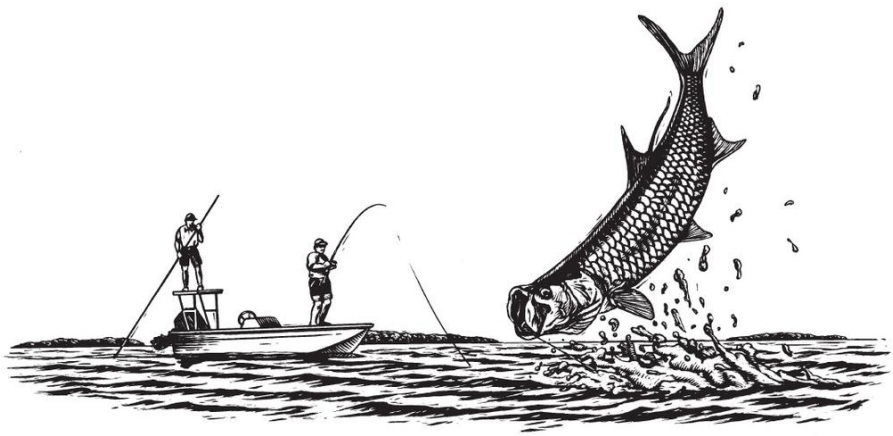
Seven Tips for Effective Knot Tying

- Before tying any knot, always check your line for any visible signs of damage. If in doubt, discard that section of the line safely.
- To reduce friction and to help the knot seat correctly, lubricate it with saliva or water before drawing it together.
- Draw the knot together slowly and evenly with a minimum of friction to ensure it seats smoothly.
- Continue to draw the knot together as tight as possible. A knot will begin to slip just before it breaks—so the tighter it is drawn together, the more force it can withstand before it starts to slip.
- Once the knot has been tightened as much as possible and seated correctly, trim the knot ends with the correct cutting tool for the line material. Trim the ends closely to avoid catching on rod rings, hooks, or weeds.
- Visually check your knot – good knots look good. If you are not fully confident that the knot has been tied and seated correctly – don't gamble! Cut it off and retie it. We have all heard the story about 'the one that got away'!
- Practise tying knots at home until it becomes second nature. You will find, like most fishermen, that you come to rely on a small number of knots to cover most situations. It is vital to be able to tie those knots quickly and with full confidence.

Securing Line to Reel or Spool

The first and most basic connection the fisherman needs is to secure one end of the line to the reel or spool. The **Arbor Knot** or **Reel Knot** is easy to tie and has proved to be an effective knot for this purpose.


1
2
3
Trim the knot end to avoid it catching on line stored on the spool.



KNOTS FOR JOINING LINES

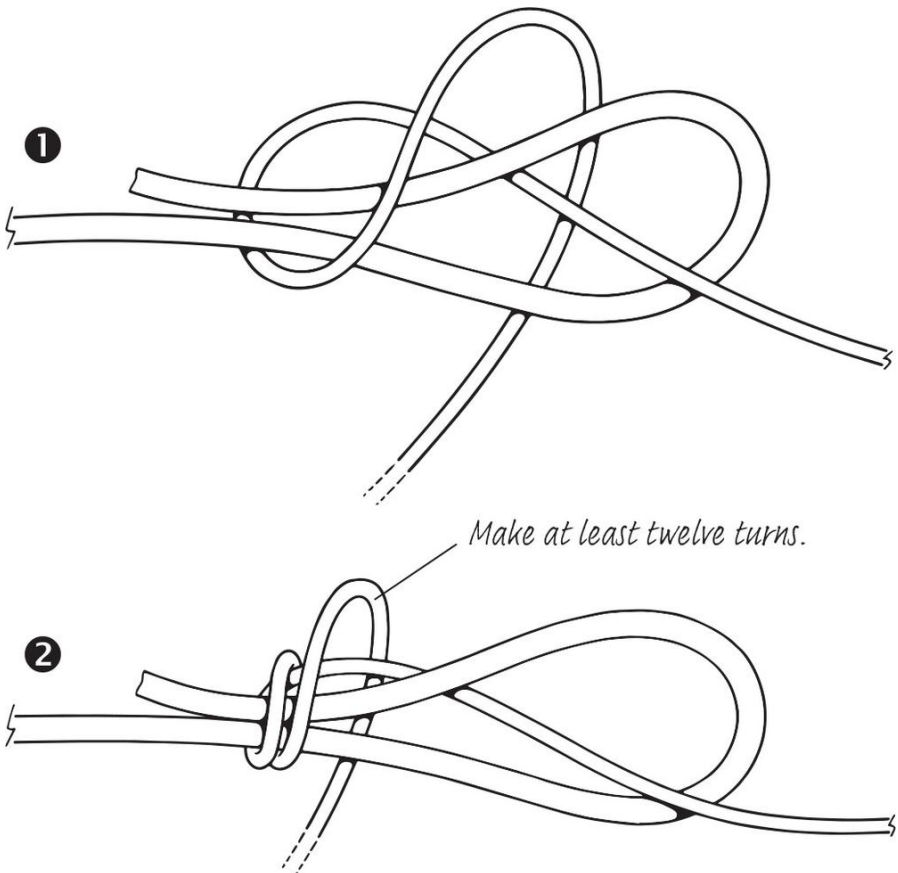
A knot that is used for joining two lines together is one of the most important connections in the entire tackle system.

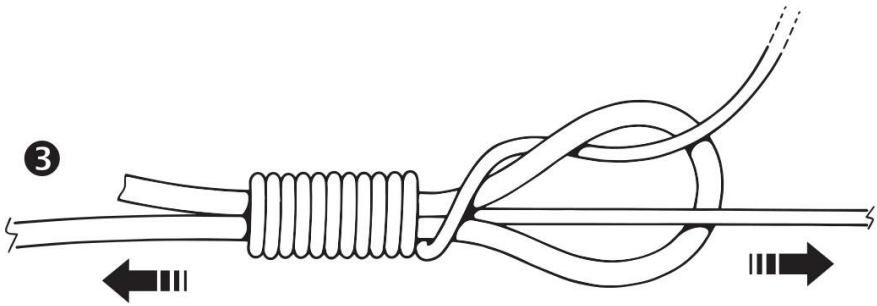
When correctly tied, the four knots illustrated and described in this section are all tried, tested, and reliable. They should cover all possibilities, from joining two sections of the same line to joining two completely different lines.

Experiment with these knots, trying different makes of line if necessary and varying the number of turns until you settle on the knot that suits your particular need and level of confidence.

Albright Knot

The Albright Knot is one of the most effective fishing knots for joining lines of different materials and unequal diameters – for example, when tying backing line to a fly line or monofilament lines of widely different sizes.

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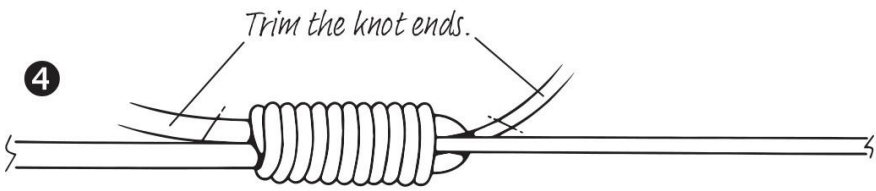
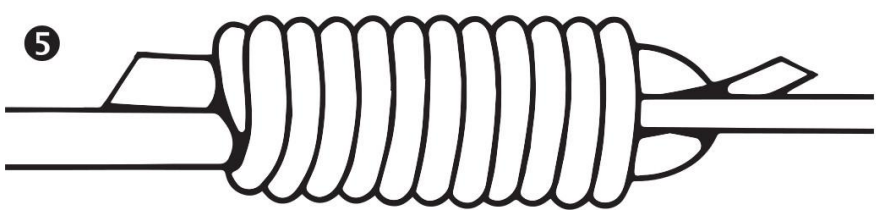
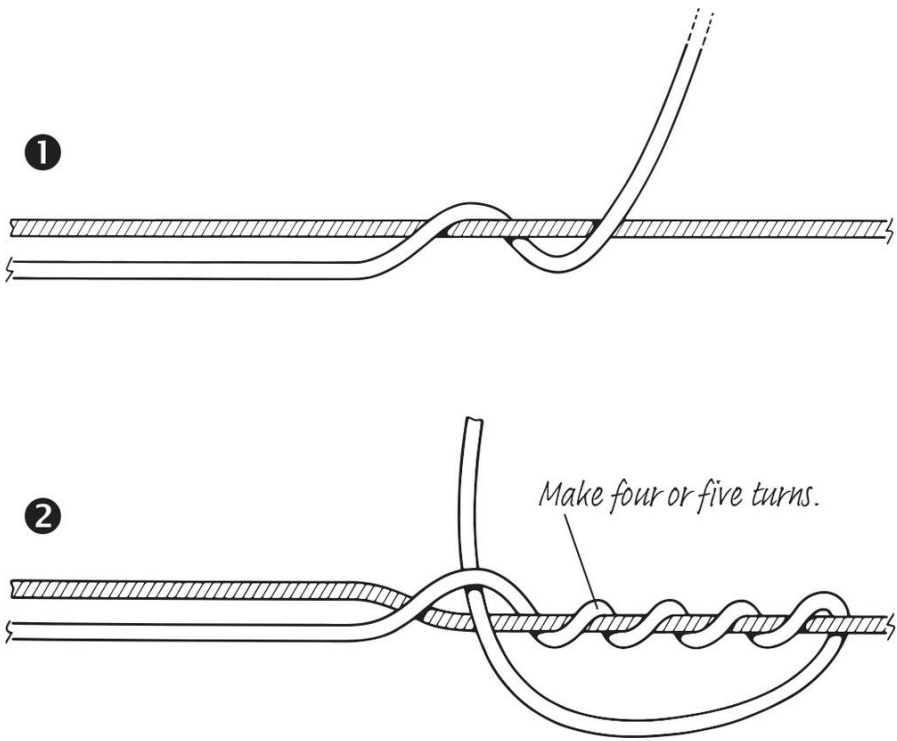
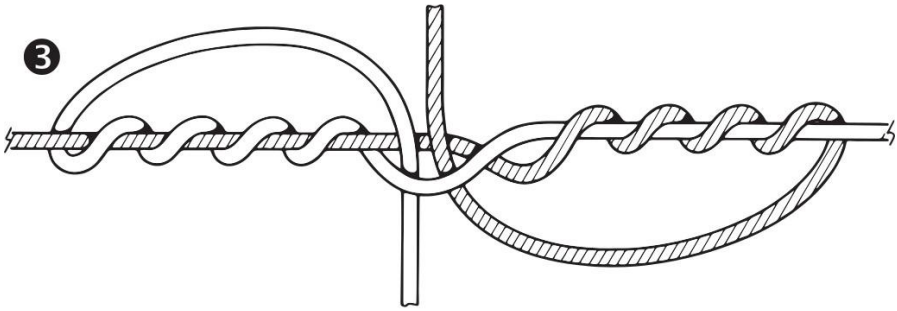

Trim the knot ends.
4

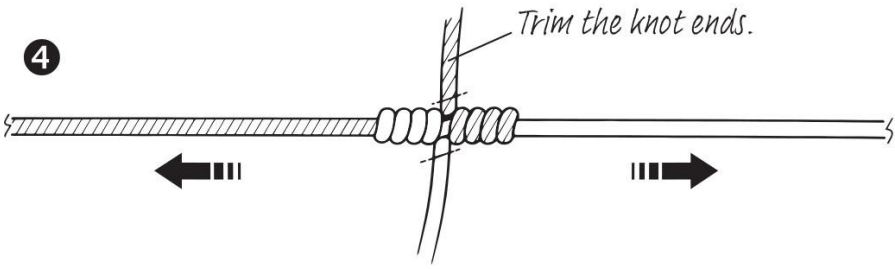

5

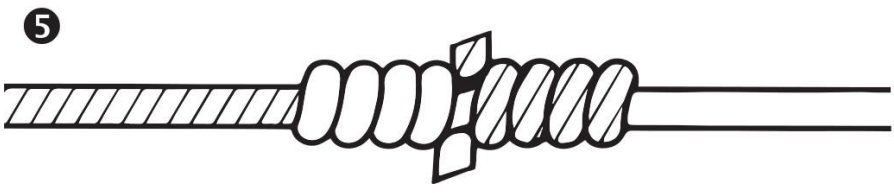
Blood Knot

This knot is a firm favourite with many fishermen and one of the most widely used fishing knots in the world. It has a relatively high knot strength, with the turns (a minimum of five with each line) helping the knot to absorb strain and shock. It is most effective for joining monofilament lines of the same or similar diameters but can also be used in many other fishing situations.









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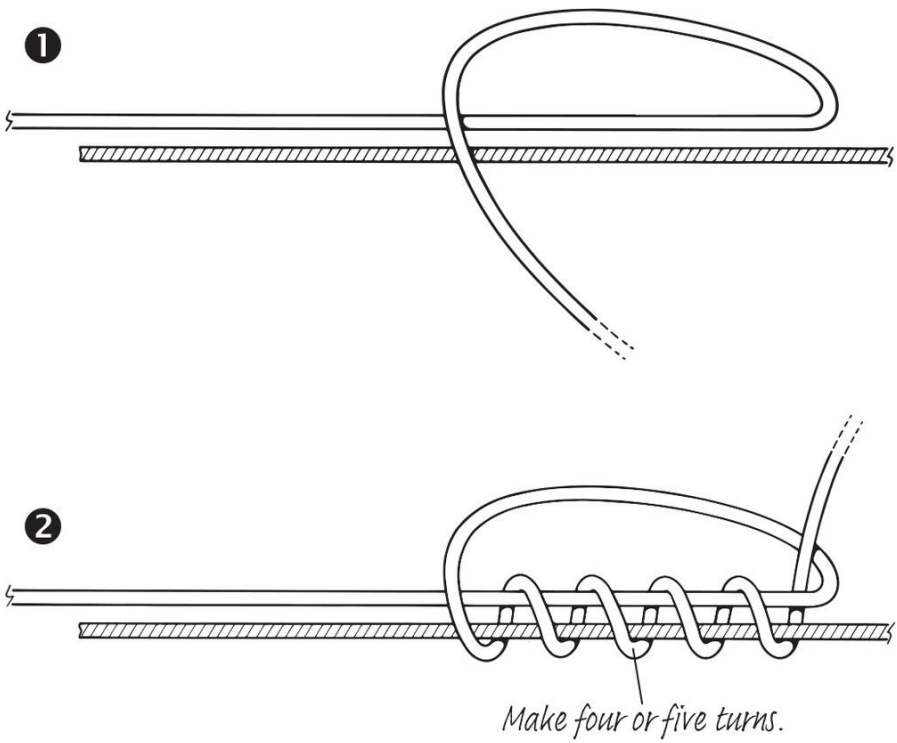
Double Uni-Knot

The Double Uni-Knot, also known as the Double Grinner Knot, is a pair of Uni- or Grinner Knots tied back to back with the two knots seating against each other and forming a very strong connection. It is an easy knot to tie and is one of the most effective ways of joining two sections of a tippet or leader.



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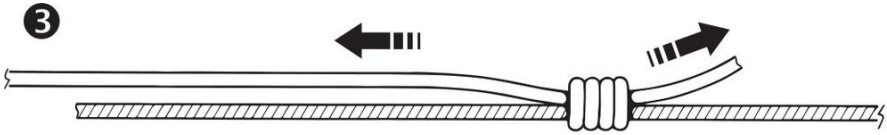

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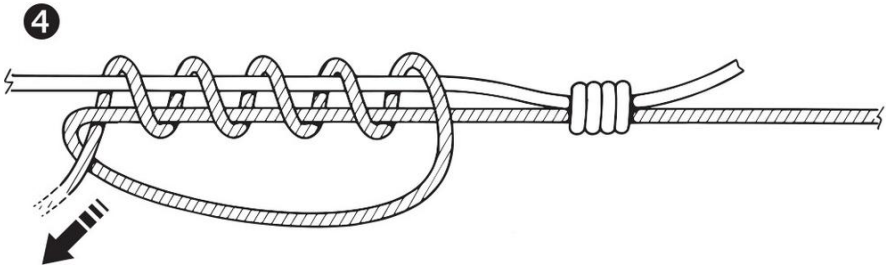

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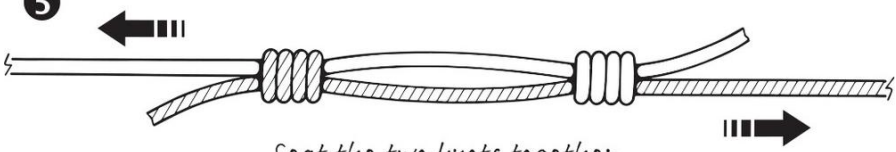
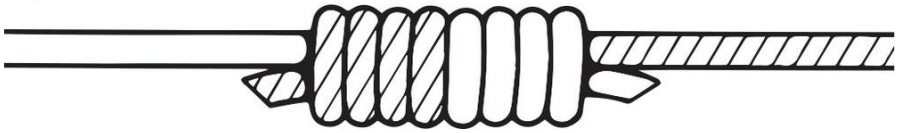


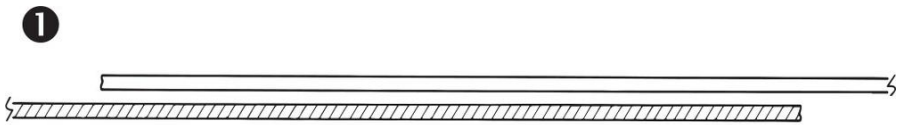
Seat the two knots together and trim the knot ends.

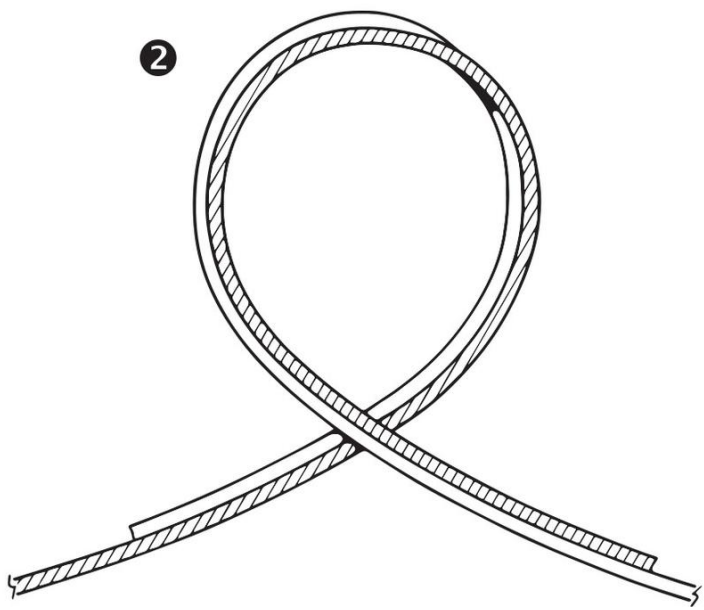
❻

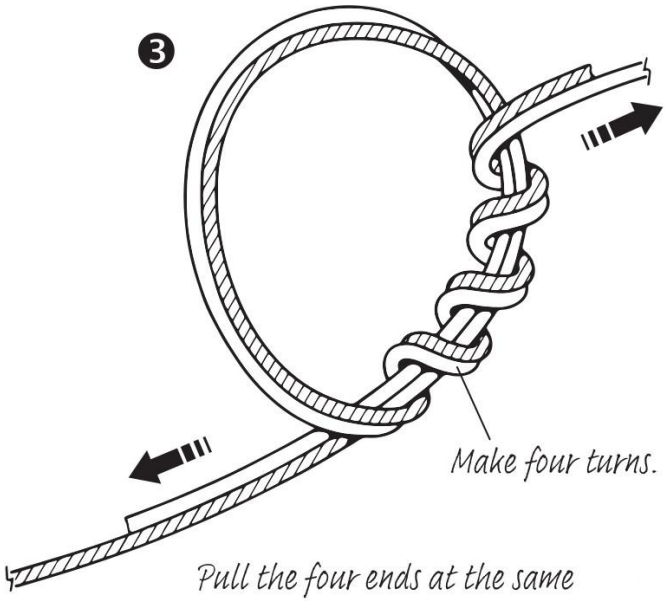


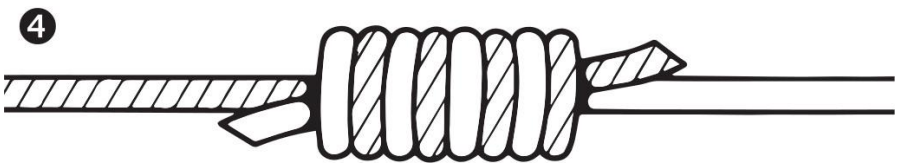
Surgeon's Knot

Also known as the Water Knot, this very efficient knot is a true all-rounder: It is fast to tie and it can be used with lines of equal or unequal diameters as well as differing materials. To properly construct this knot one of the lines must be short enough to enable the end to pass through the loop.









TYING TOOL AVAILABLE

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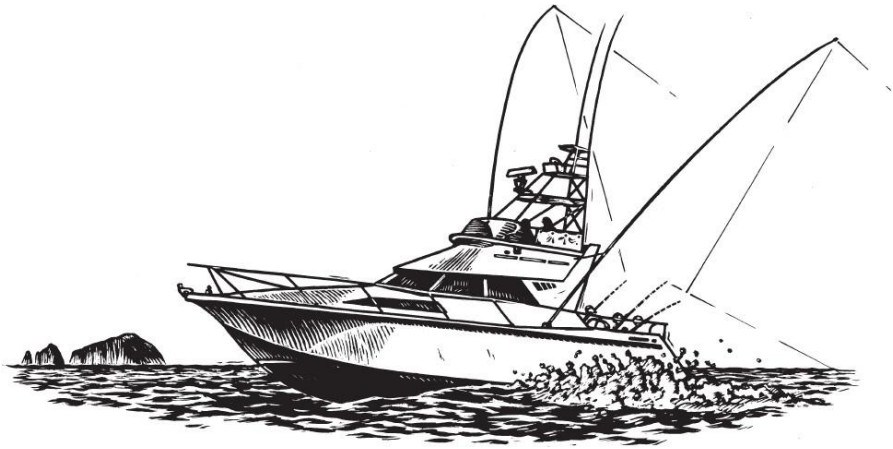


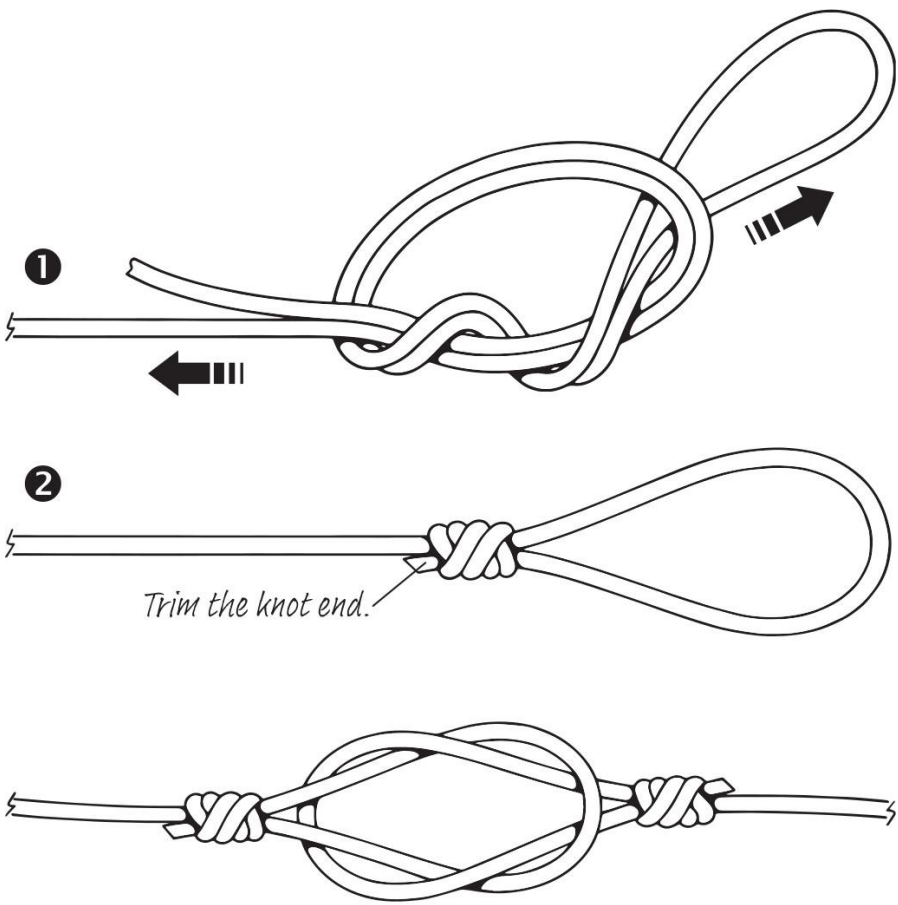
LOOPS

Loops are an integral part of any tackle system. Correctly tied loops are exceptionally strong, and interlocking loops provide fishing with one of its most popular line-connection methods.

The interlocking-loop system has many advantages. For example, leaders can be pre-made at home and finished with a loop, ready for quick and easy connection while fishing.

Surgeon's Loop

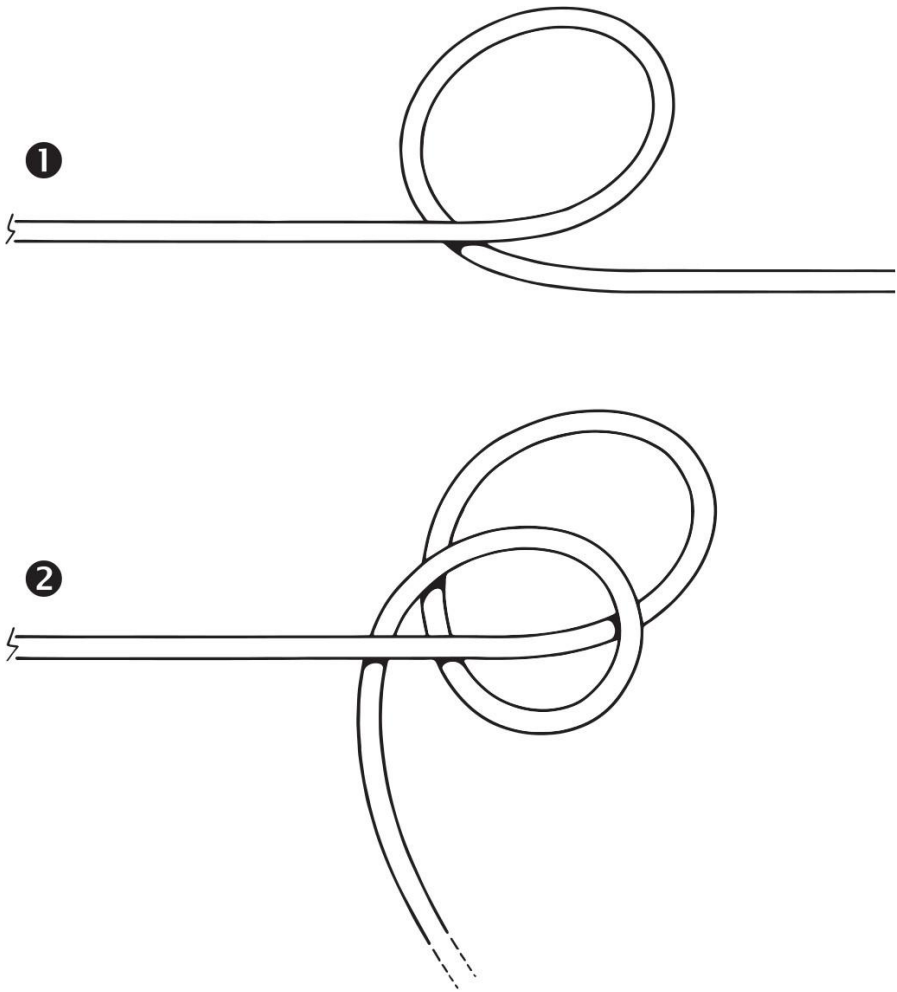
The Surgeon's or Double Loop is a quick and successful loop that does not slip when tied properly. It is tied in exactly the same way as the Surgeon's Knot (see p18) except it is constructed from a single length of line.

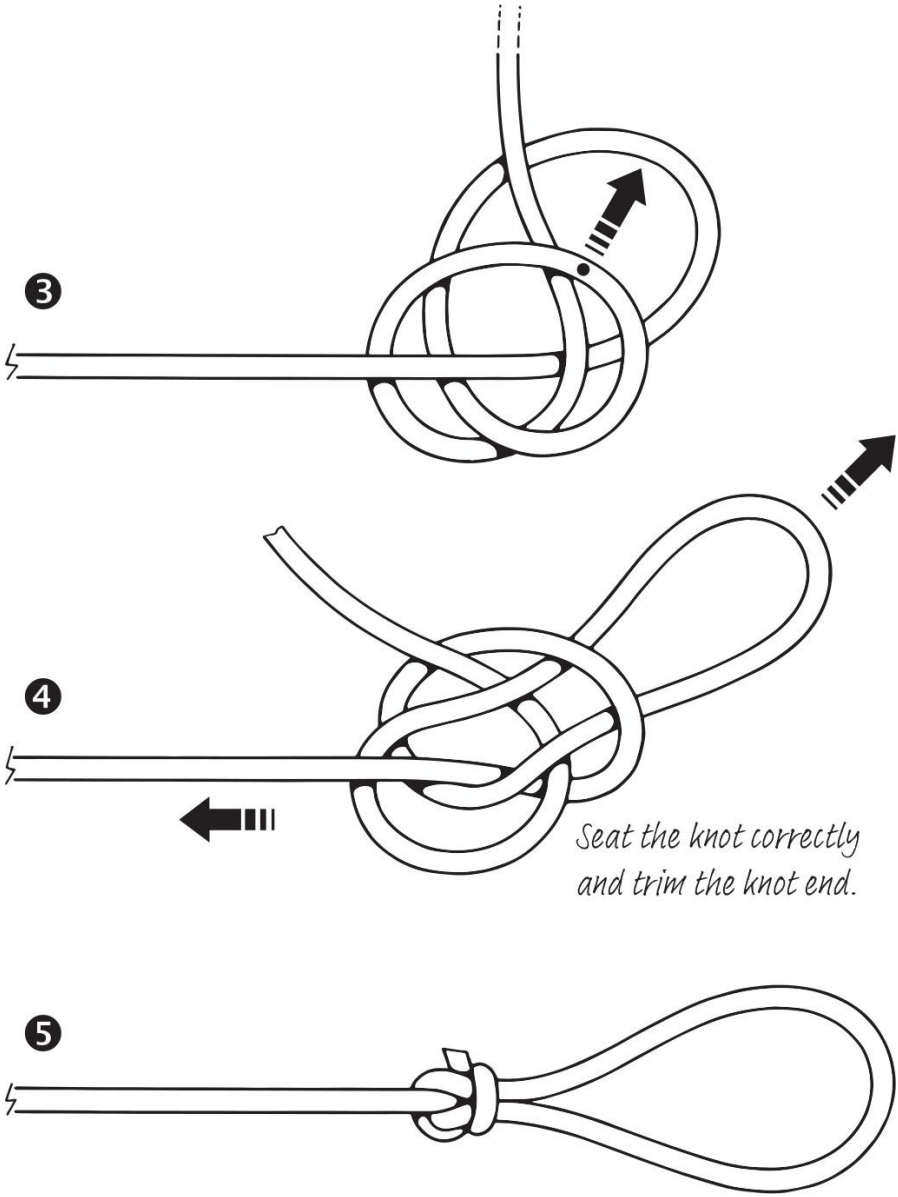


Interlocked loops are a quick and easy method of joining tackle together.

Perfection Loop

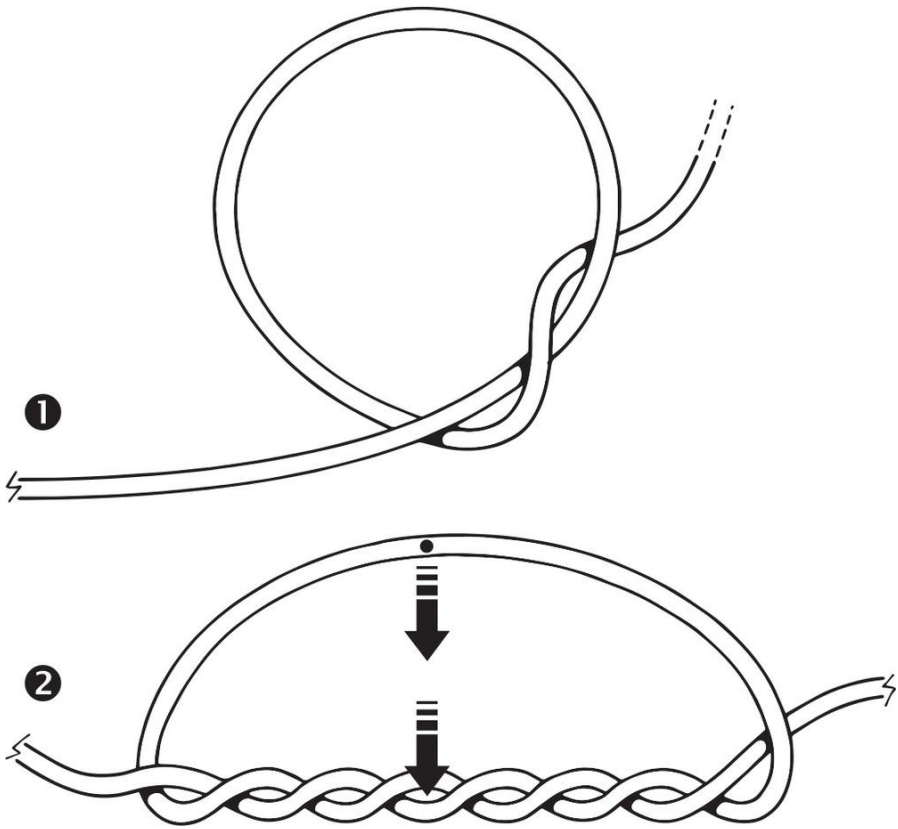
This very strong and reliable loop is formed at the end of a line for attaching leaders, and tippets.




3
4
Seat the knot correctly
and trim the knot end.
5

Dropper Loop

This knot, also known as the Blood Loop, forms a loop at right angles in the line. It is an excellent way for fly fishermen to attach additional flies (called droppers) to the line. It can also be used to attach weights and extra hooks to create a paternoster system (a weighted line with a series of hooks positioned at intervals along it) for boat and beach fishing.



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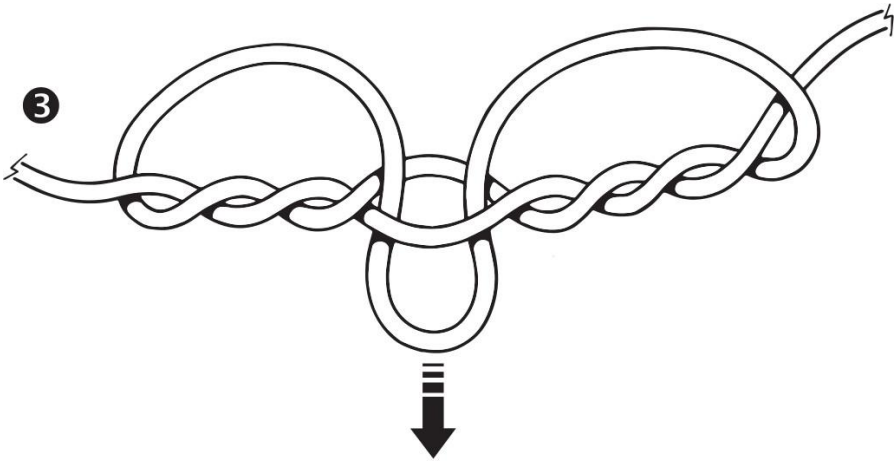

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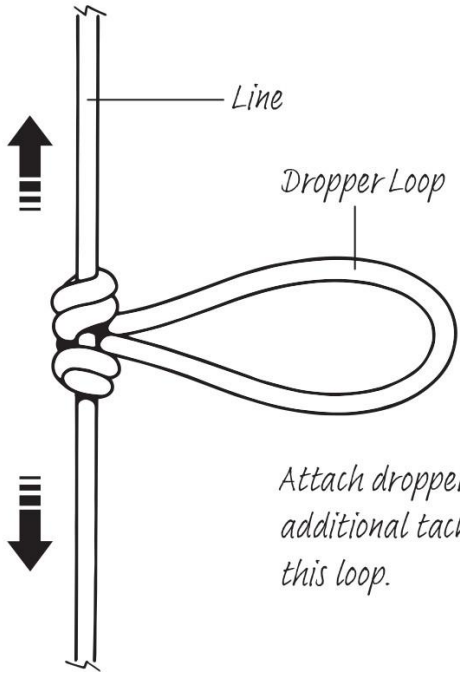
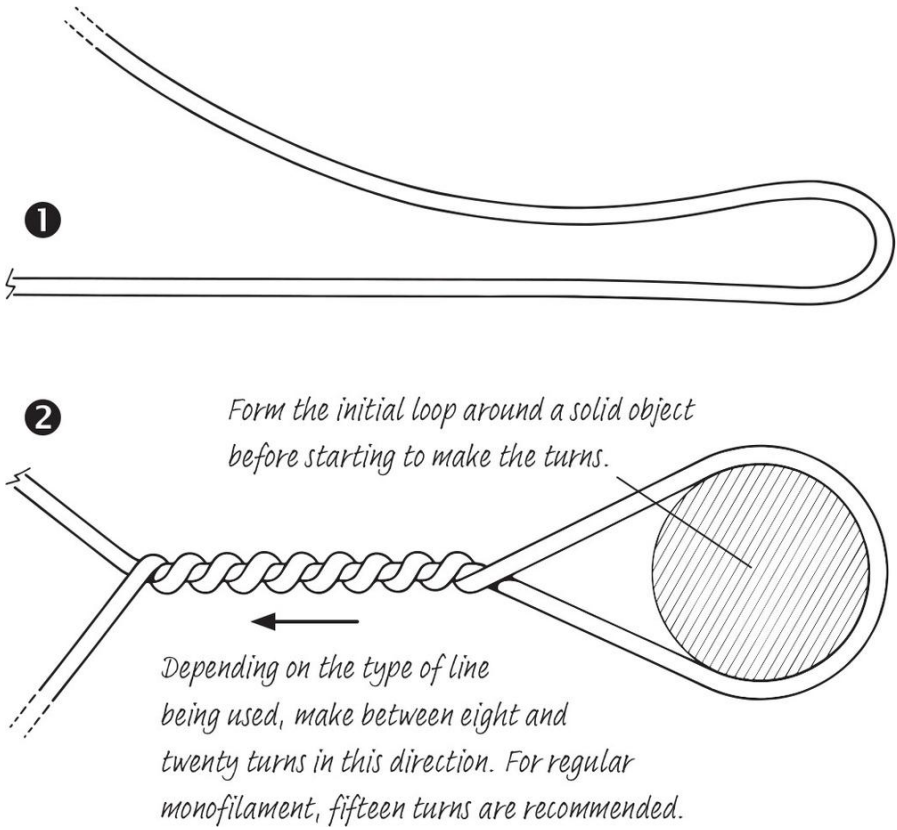
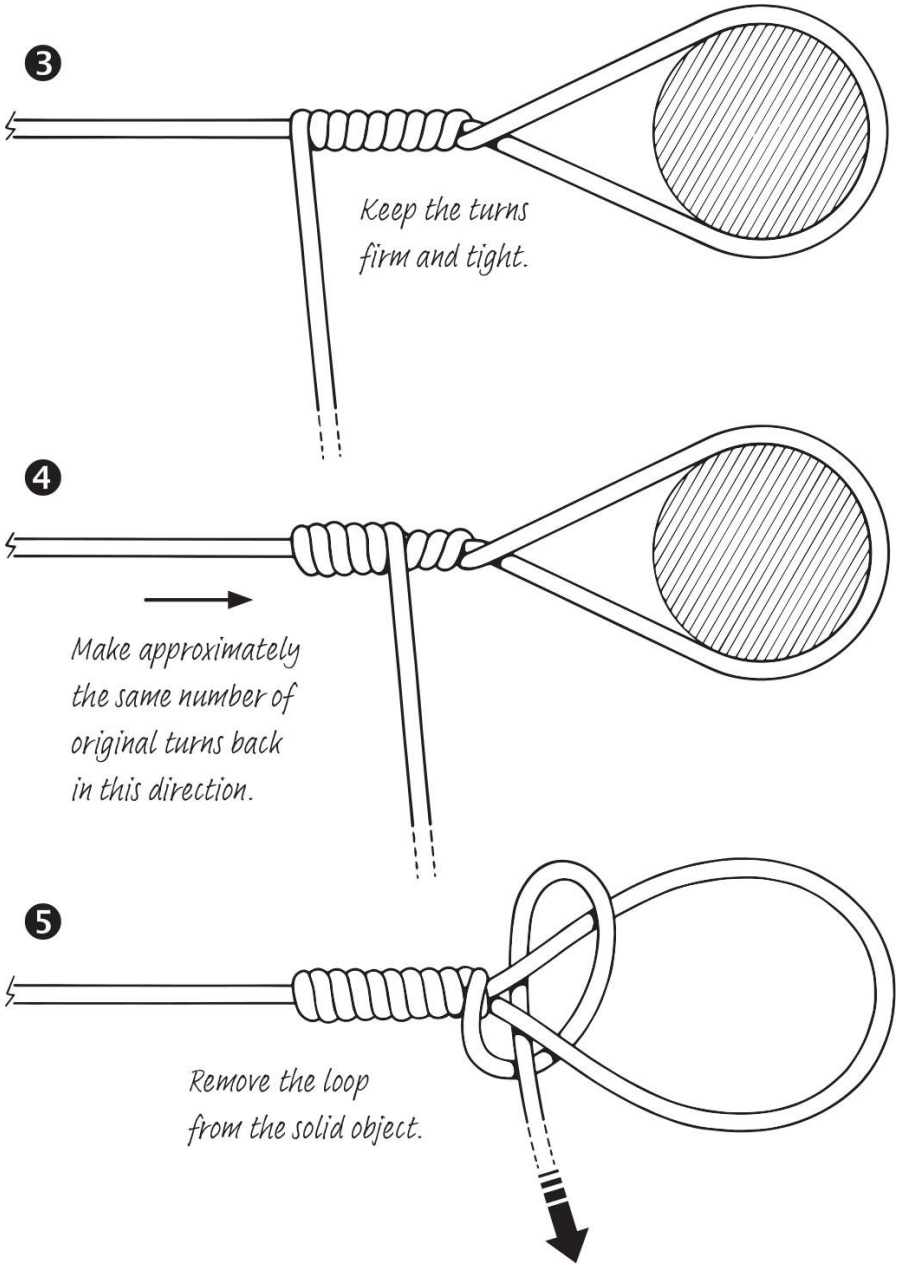


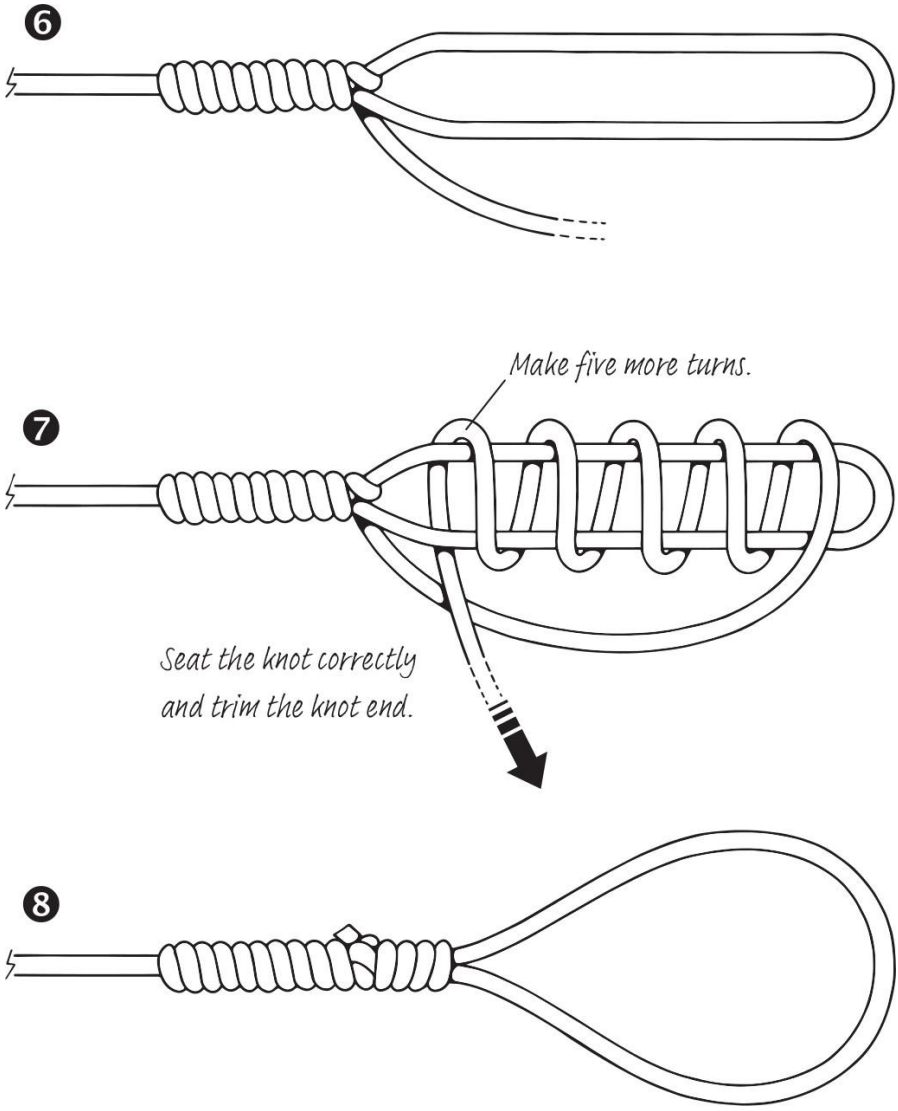
Attach droppers or additional tackle to this loop.

Bimini Twist

The Bimini Twist provides 100 percent knot strength, making it one of the most secure loops possible. Originally developed for big-game fishing, it can be tied in monofilament or braided line and used with both light and heavy tackle. This knot may take a little time to master but its strength will prove invaluable in any line-connection system.


1
2
Form the initial loop around a solid object before starting to make the turns.
Depending on the type of line being used, make between eight and twenty turns in this direction. For regular monofilament, fifteen turns are recommended.


3
Keep the turns
firm and tight.
4
Make approximately
the same number of
original turns back
in this direction.
5
Remove the loop
from the solid object.


6
Make five more turns.
7
Seat the knot correctly
and trim the knot end.
8

JOINING LEADER OR BACKING TO FLY LINE

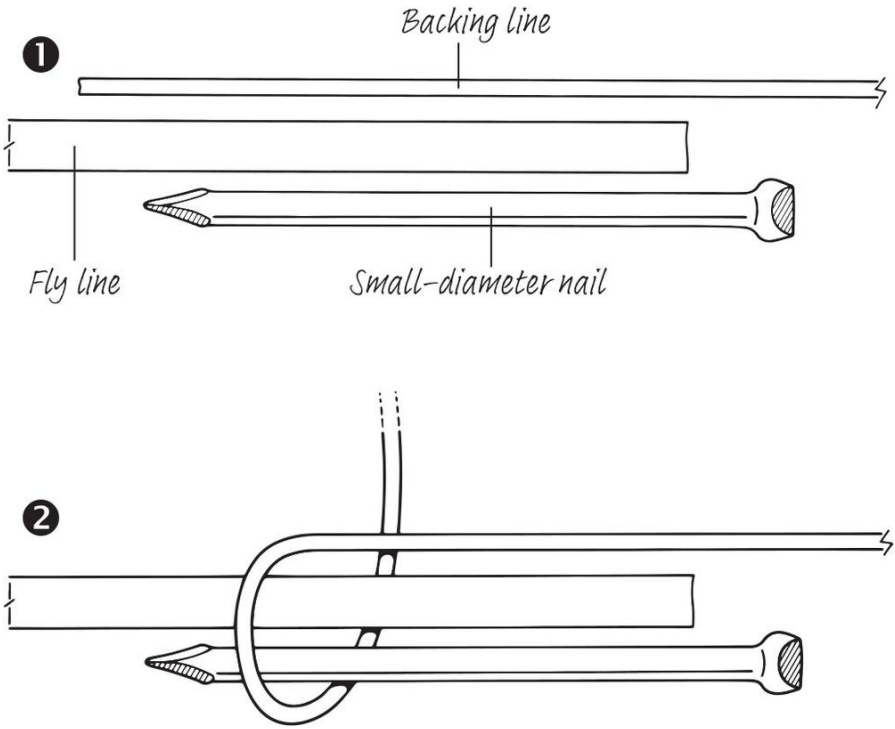
This section is specifically for fly fishermen. The fly line requires a strong and smooth joint at the reel or spool end for the backing line, and a similar joint for the butt section of the leader at the other end of the line.

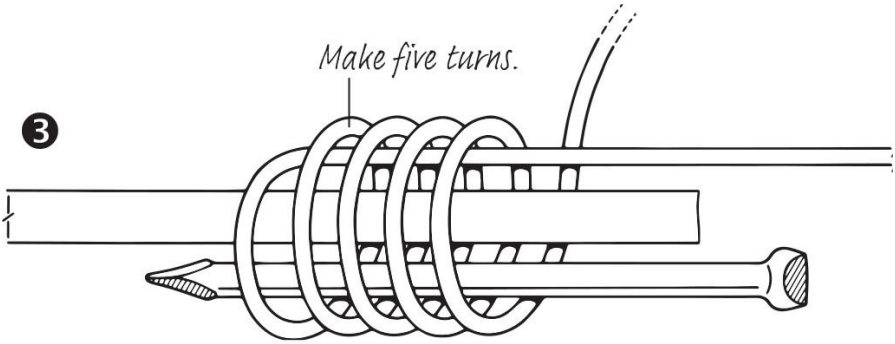
Fly fishermen need to be very confident that these knots will be reliable, so initial practise is strongly advised before tying the final knot.

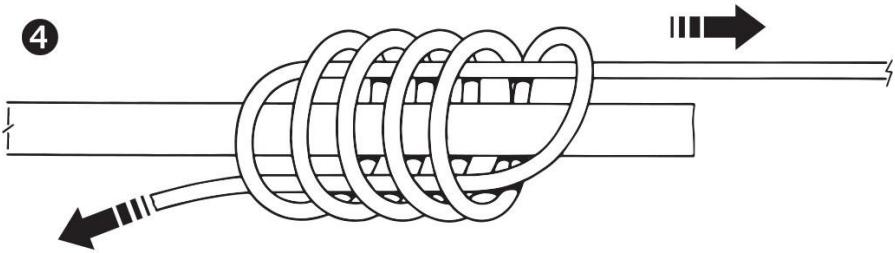
Various methods of tying the knots are illustrated and described in this section. If you find the knots difficult to tie, seek help from your local tackle dealer, who will always be pleased to help you out.

Nail Knot

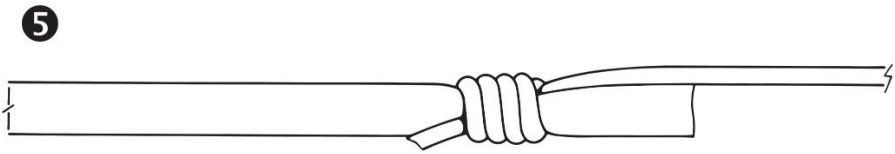
The main use for this knot is to attach backing line to a fly line. To tie the knot you need a small-diameter nail, hence the name, but a straightened paper clip or needle will do the job just as well. The nail acts to stiffen the fly line while forming the knot and then to provide a passage through which to return the line.







Remove the nail, seat the knot correctly, and trim the knot end.



TYING TOOL AVAILABLE

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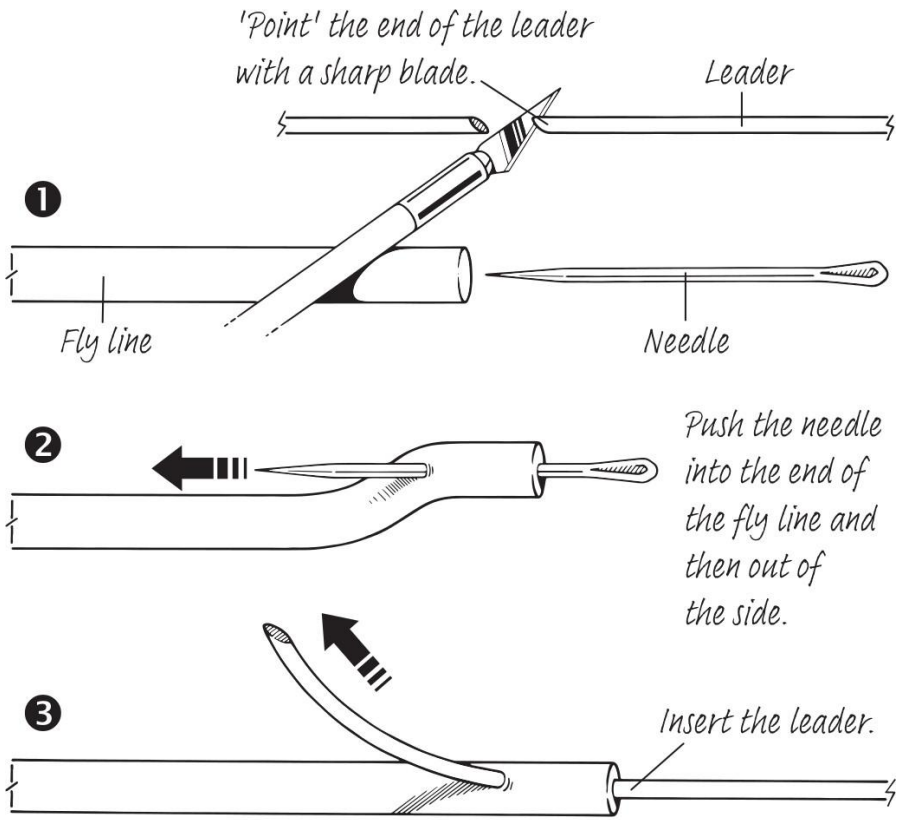
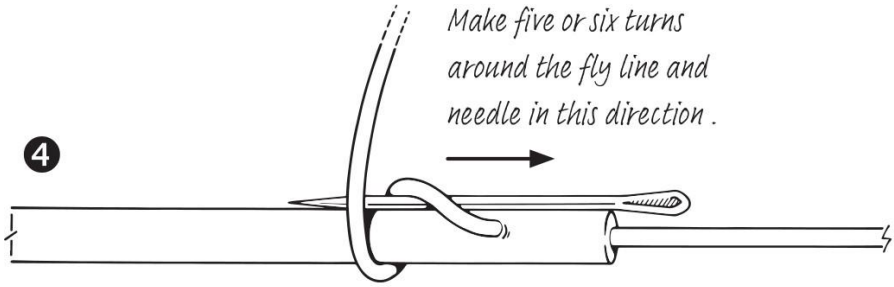
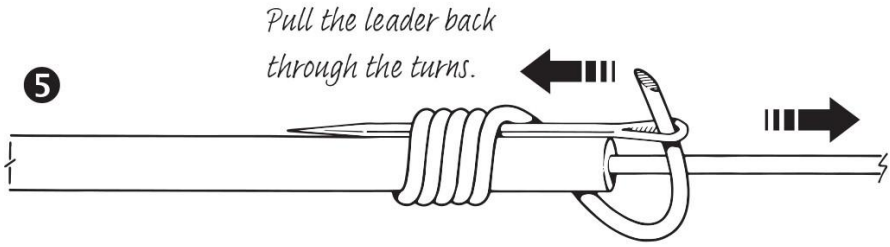
Needle Knot

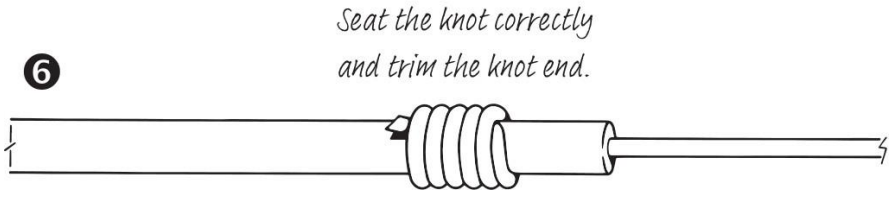
This knot is used specifically to create an extremely strong and streamlined connection between the fly line and the monofilament leader. Correctly tied, it will not catch or snag on the rod rings when you play a fish.


'Point' the end of the leader with a sharp blade.
Leader
1
Fly line
Needle
2
Push the needle into the end of the fly line and then out of the side.
3
Insert the leader.

Should it prove difficult to insert the leader, try step 2 again but this time with a heated needle point, and then remove. This will keep the hole open, but be careful not to damaage the lines with excess heat.





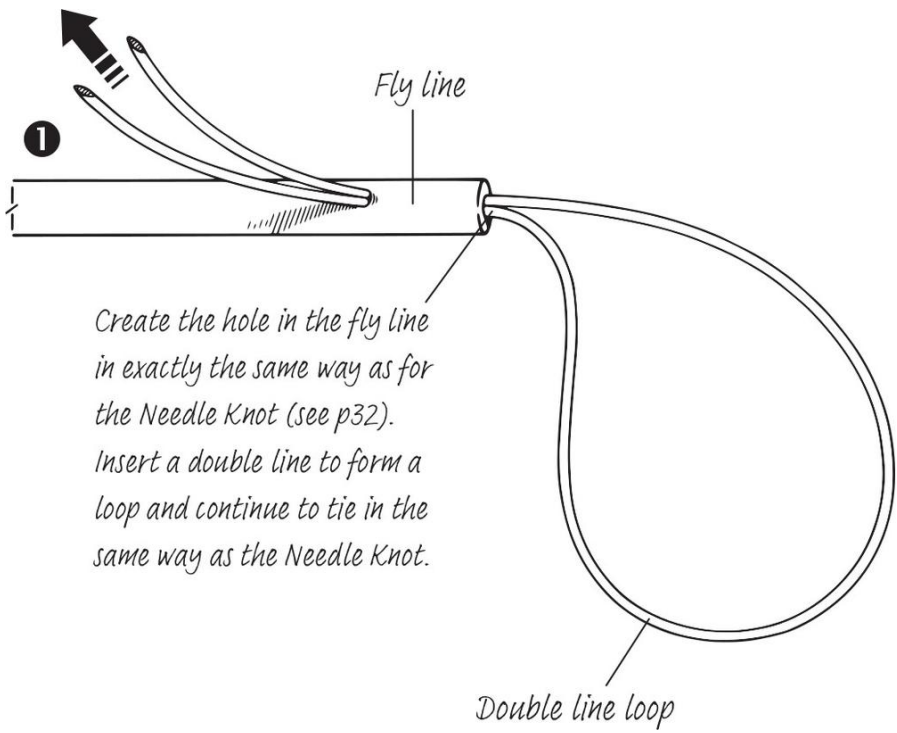


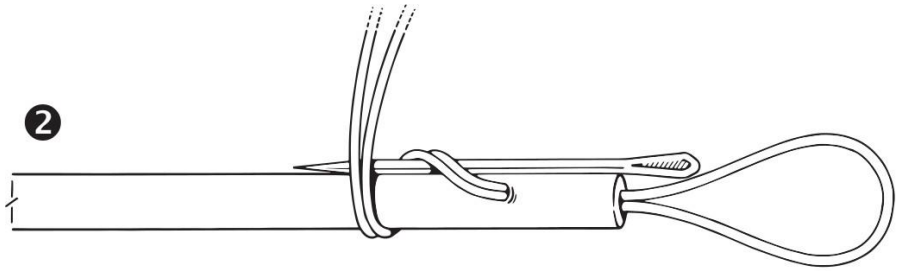
TYING TOOL AVAILABLE

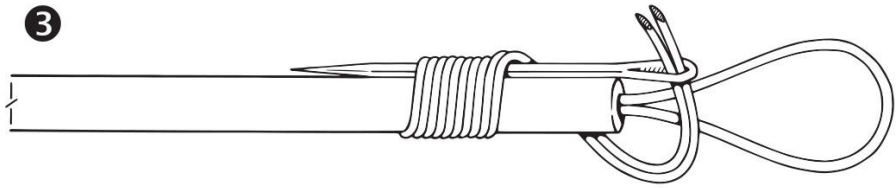
SEE PAGE 62

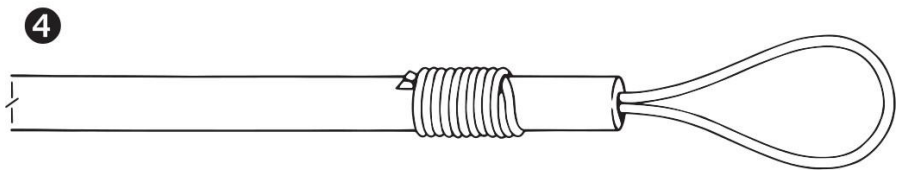
Needle Knot – Mono Loop

If you change your leader on a regular basis, then as an alternative to attaching a single line leader to your fly line, you can create a mono loop with which to attach your leader by using the quick and easy interlocking-loop method. The tying method is the same as for the Needle Knot (see p32) except you are using a double line instead of a single one.


Fly line
1
Create the hole in the fly line in exactly the same way as for the Needle Knot (see p32). Insert a double line to form a loop and continue to tie in the same way as the Needle Knot.
Double line loop





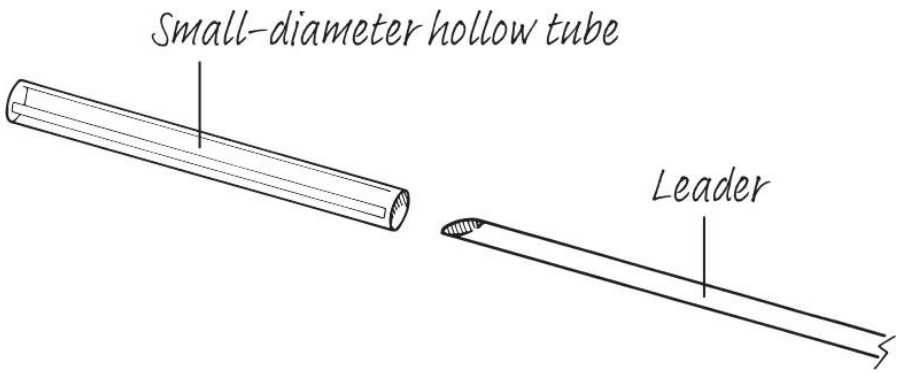


TYING TOOL AVAILABLE

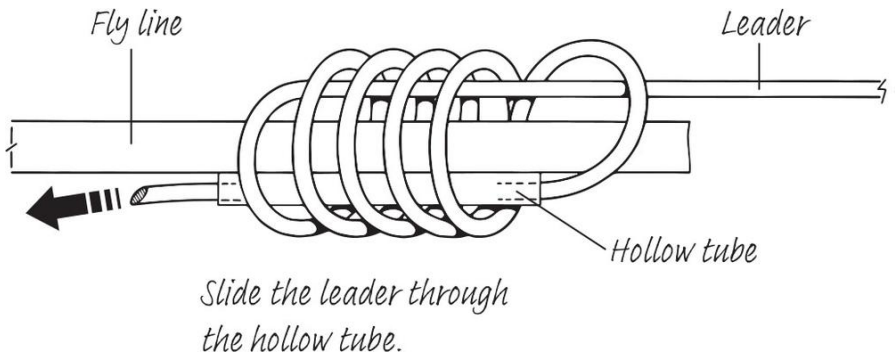
SEE PAGE 62

Tube Knot/Needle Knot

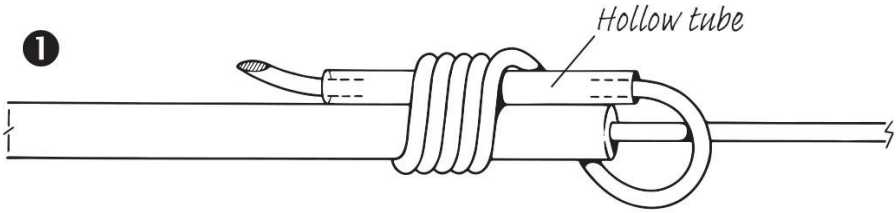
The tying method for both the Nail Knot (see p30) and the Needle Knot (see p32) can be greatly improved by substituting a small-diameter hollow tube for the traditional nail or needle.

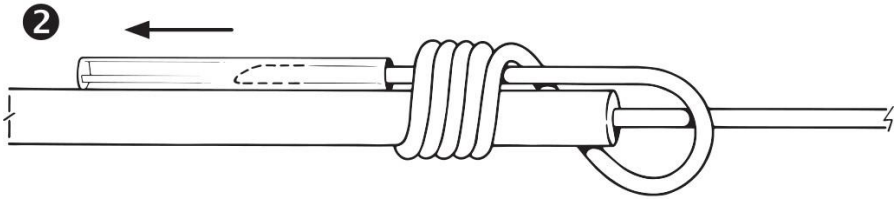


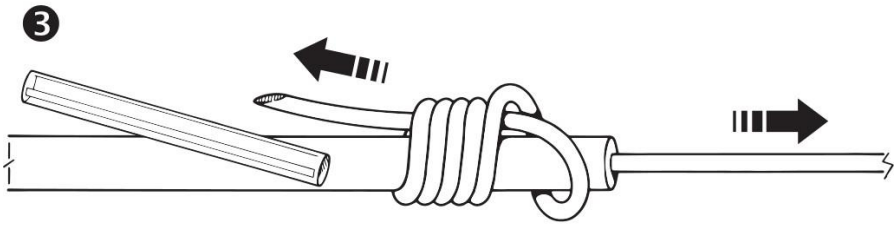
NAIL KNOT



NEEDLE KNOT







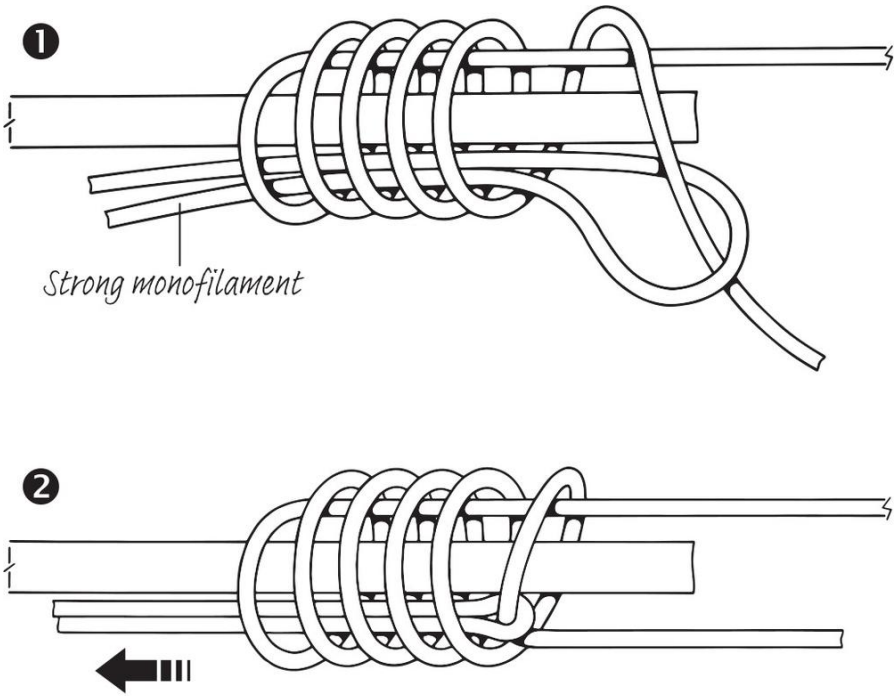
Remove the hollow tube, seat the knot correctly, and trim the knot end.

TYING TOOL AVAILABLE

SEE PAGE 62

Emergency Nail Knot

If you find yourself in an emergency, needing to tie a nail knot to attach backing or a leader to a fly line and not having a nail or needle, you can create an emergency knot using a piece of strong monofilament.



Pull the leader through using the monofilament, and finish the knot in the same way as the Nail Knot (see p30).

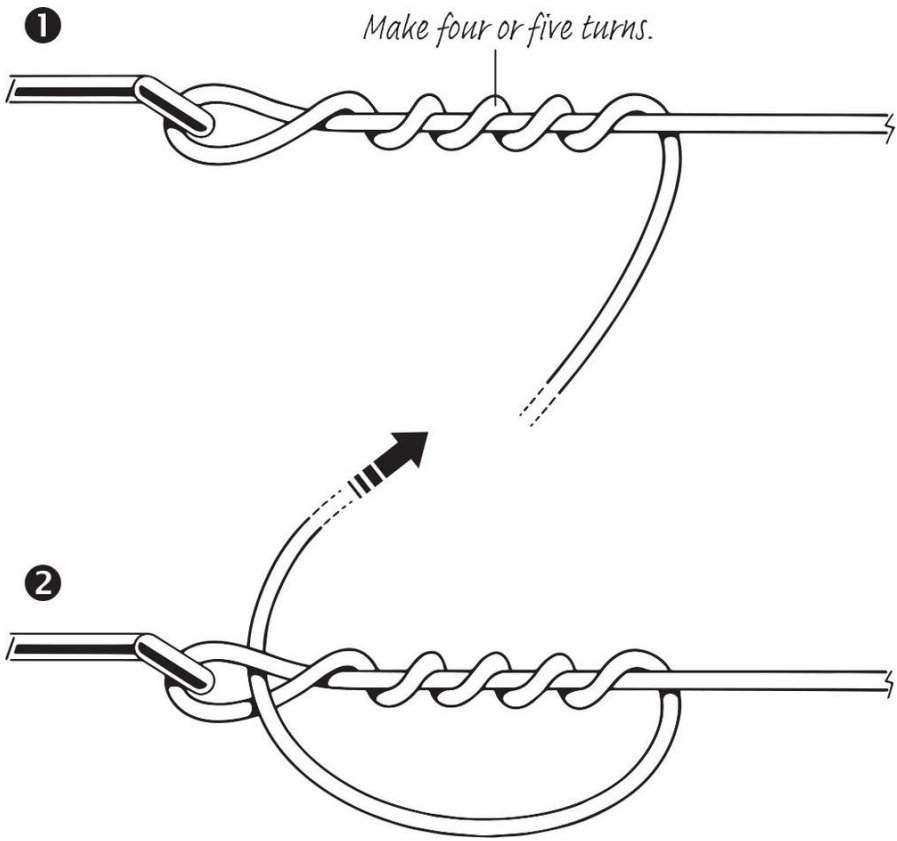
KNOTS FOR HOOKS AND TACKLE

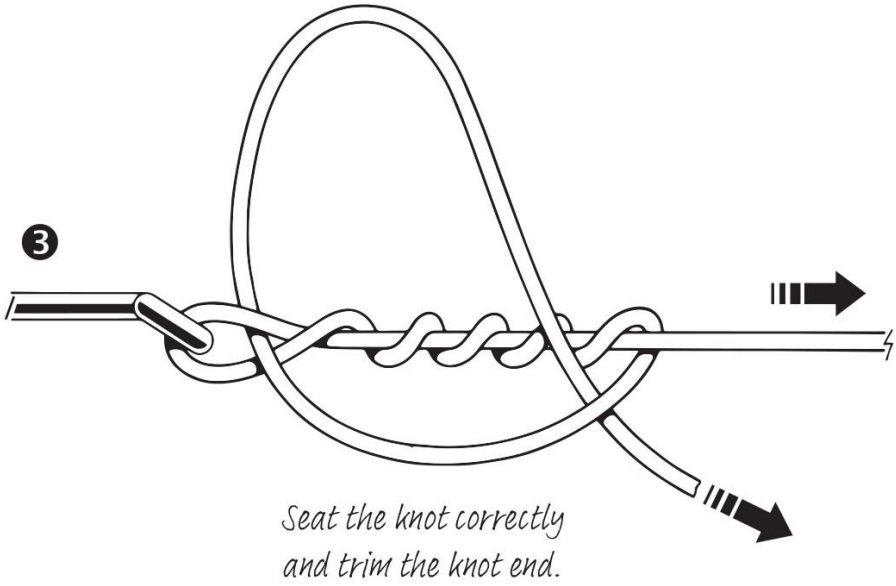
The knots in this section are used to attach your hook, fly, lure, swivel, or sinker to the line. There are a variety of knots illustrated and described, some with very specific uses, such as dry-fly fishing.

Whichever knot you select you will find yourself tying over and over again, in many different situations and weather conditions. The knot will be a vital link in your tackle system, so it is important to experiment, practise, and be fully confident with it.

Improved Clinch Knot

Also known as the Tucked Half Blood Knot, this old, tried and tested knot is a firm favourite with many fishermen. It is very successfully tied with fine monofilament, but when heavier monofilament is used it can prove difficult to draw the knot up tightly.



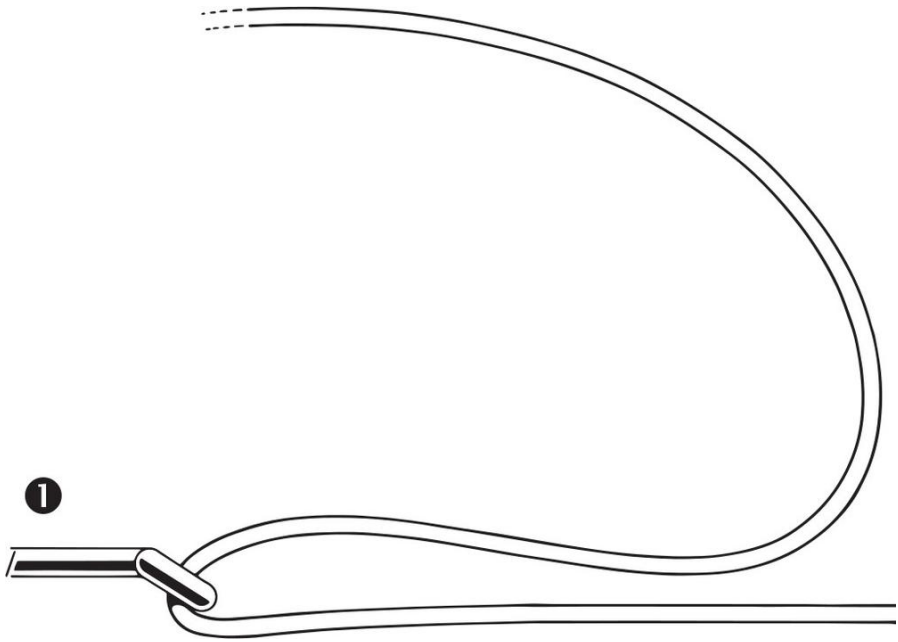


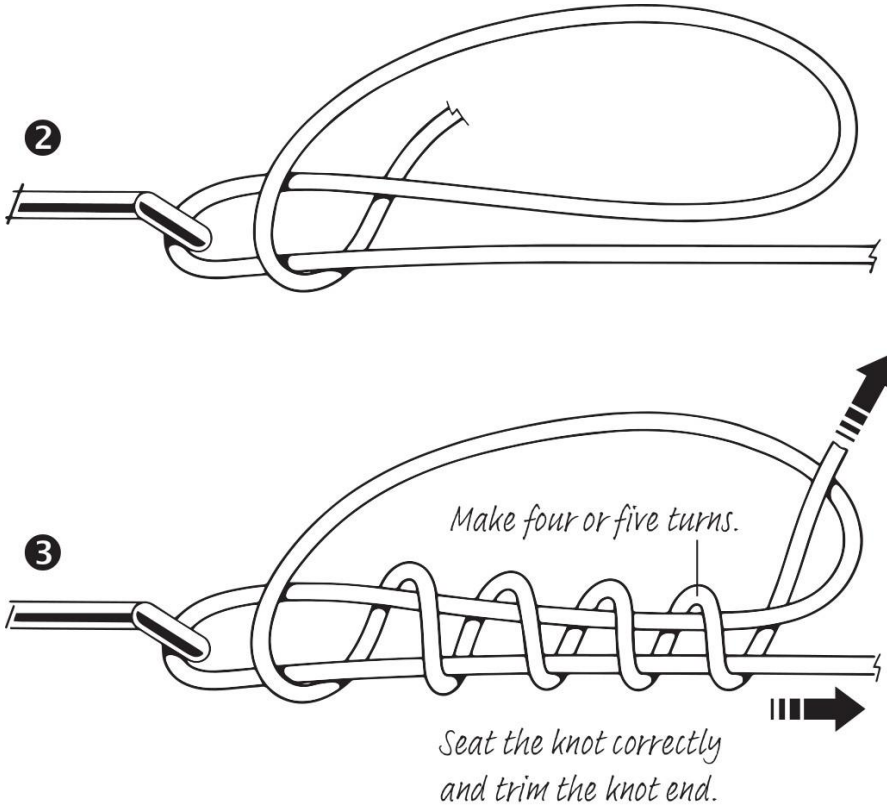
TYING TOOL AVAILABLE

SEE PAGE 60

UNI-KNOT

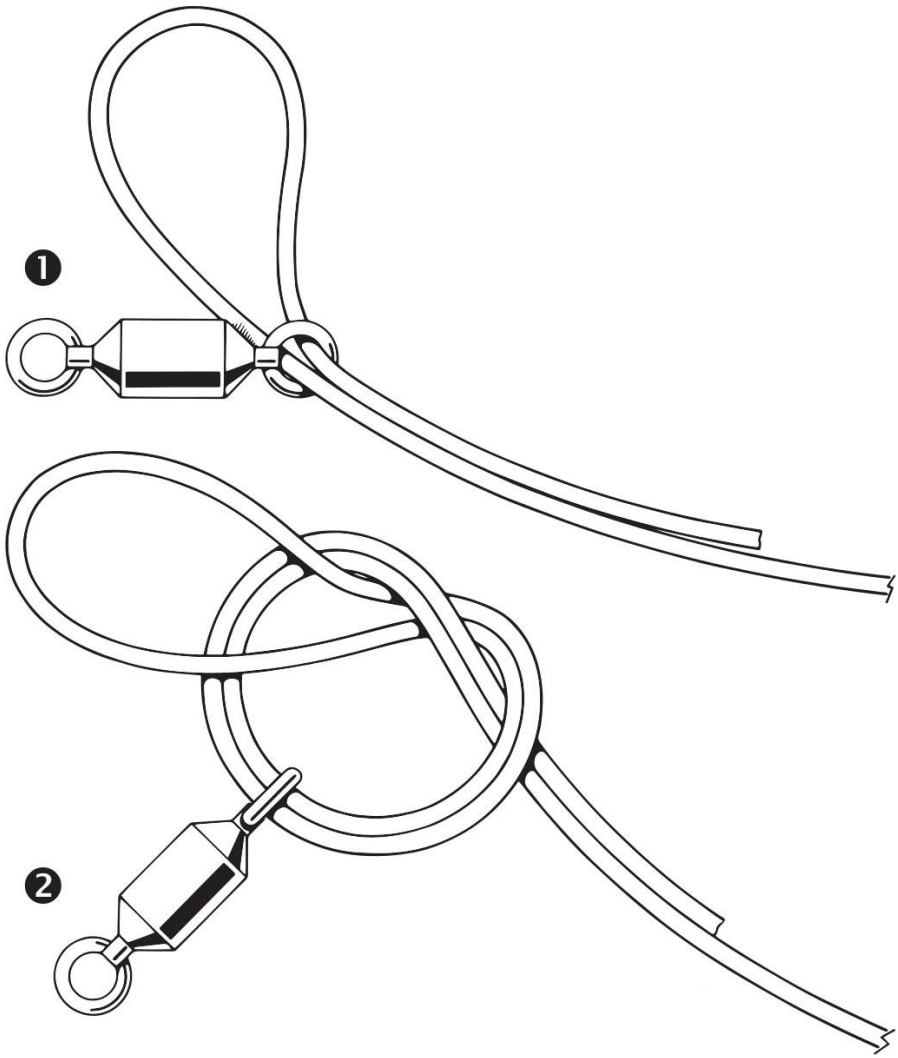
Also known as the Grinner Knot, this is an extremely reliable knot for attaching eyed hooks, swivels, and sinkers. It can be used with most types and sizes of line.

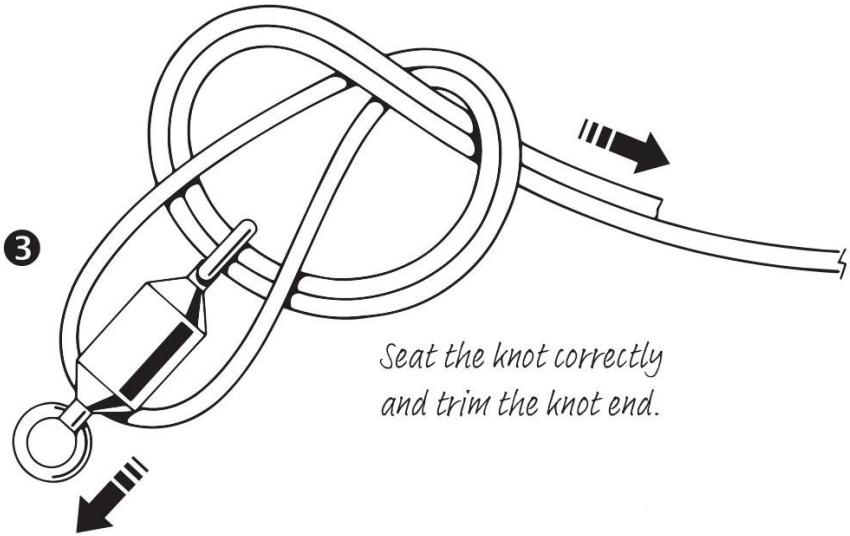


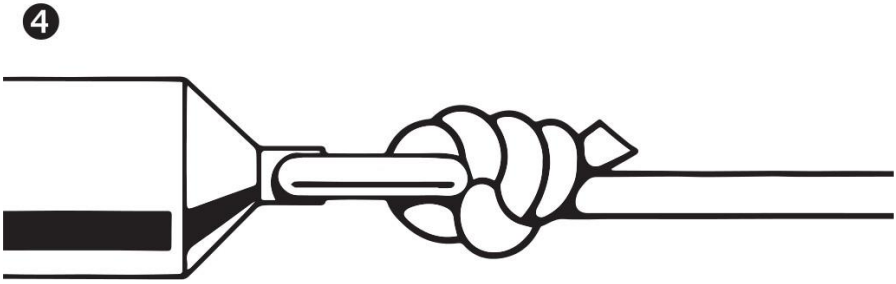

2
3
Make four or five turns.
Seat the knot correctly
and trim the knot end.
4

Palomar Knot

This simple and effective knot is best used with swivels, lures, or large-eyed hooks. It can draw up into a rather bulky knot so it is not suitable for use with very light tackle.

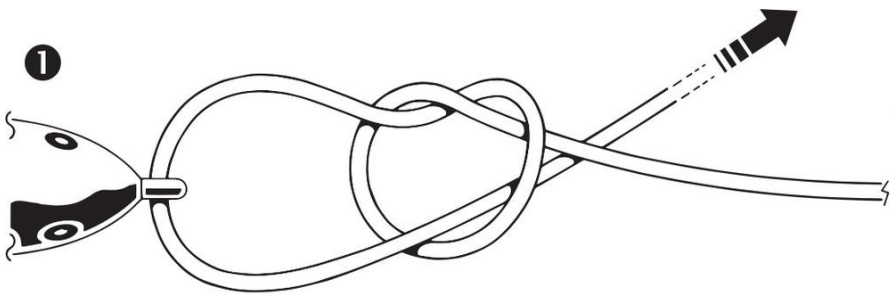


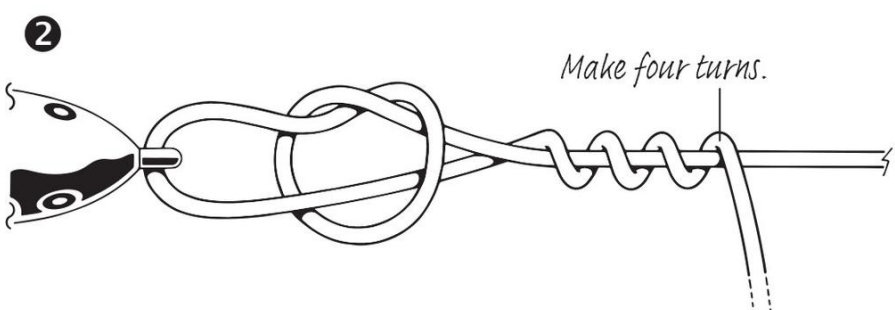

3
Seat the knot correctly
and trim the knot end.


4

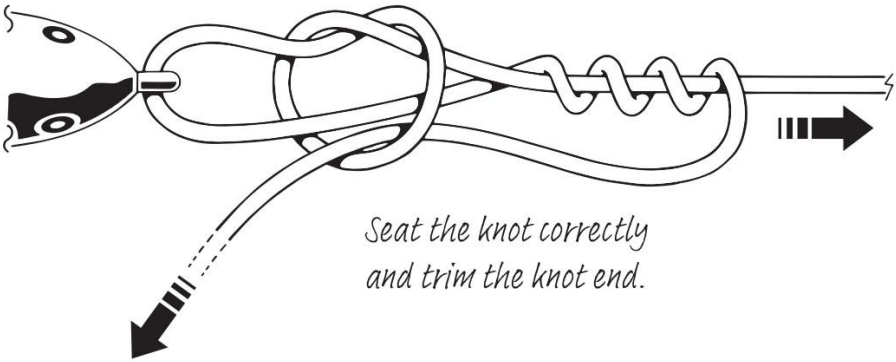
Non-Slip Mono Knot

An artificial lure attached with a loop and knotted with this Non-slip Mono Knot will move around more in the water, creating a better action – whereas a tightly-seated knot will restrict the lure's movement. This knot has proved successful with both light and heavy tackle.



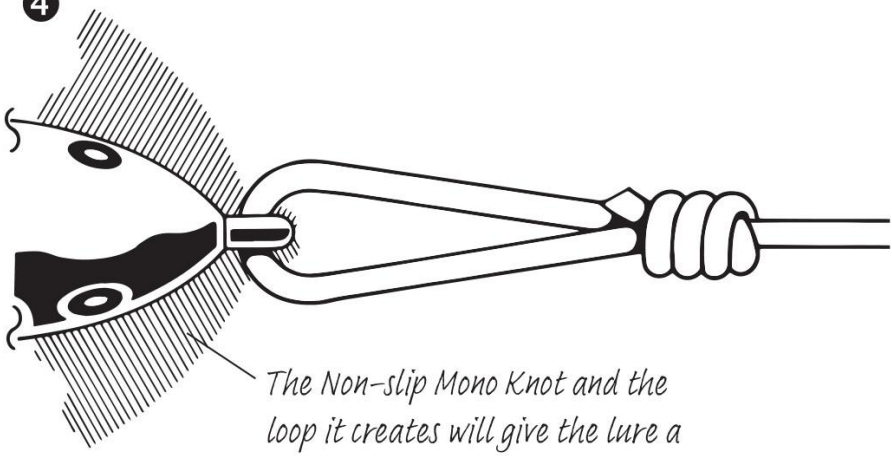


❸



Seat the knot correctly and trim the knot end.

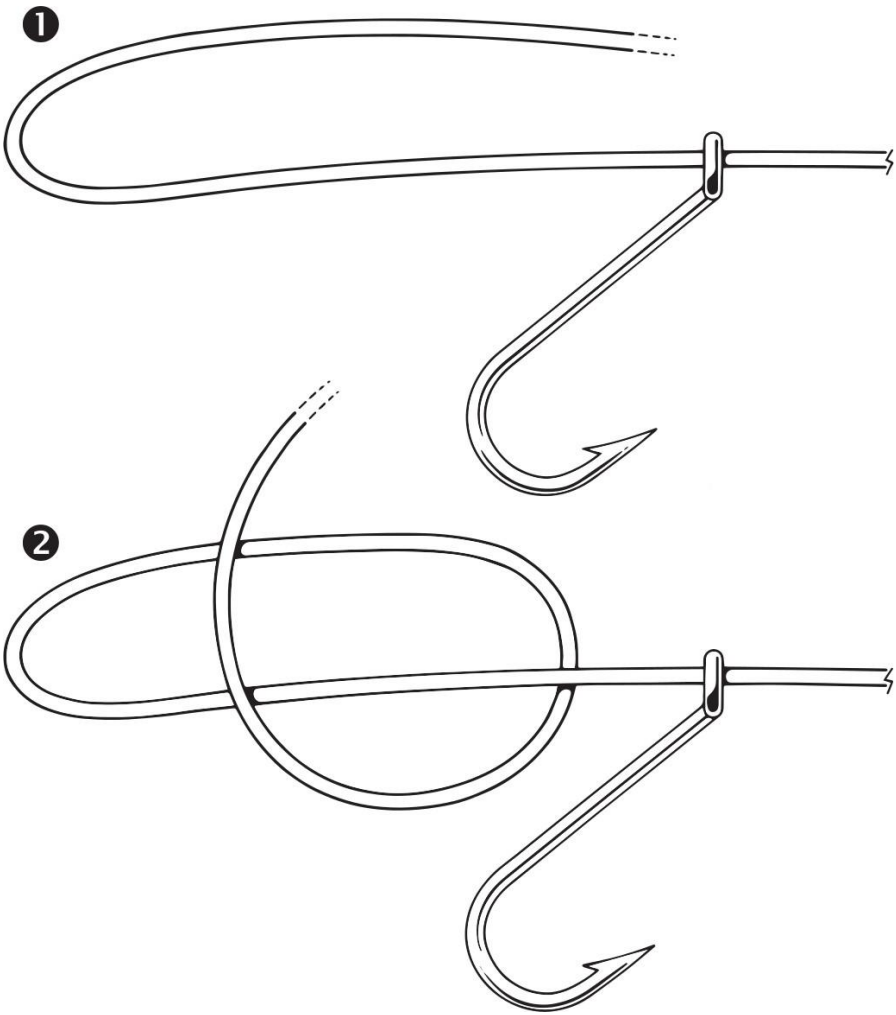
❹

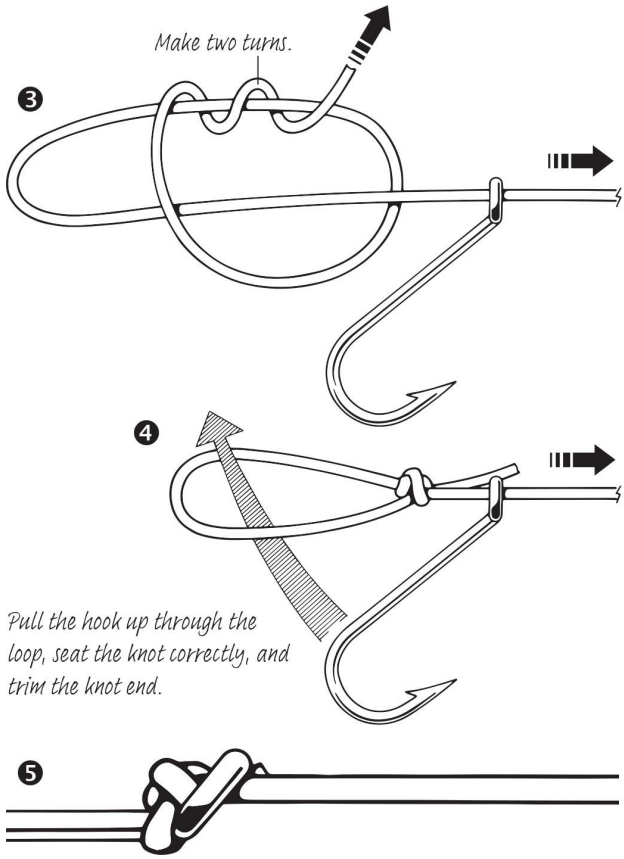


The Non-slip Mono Knot and the loop it creates will give the lure a better action in the water.

Improved Turle Knot

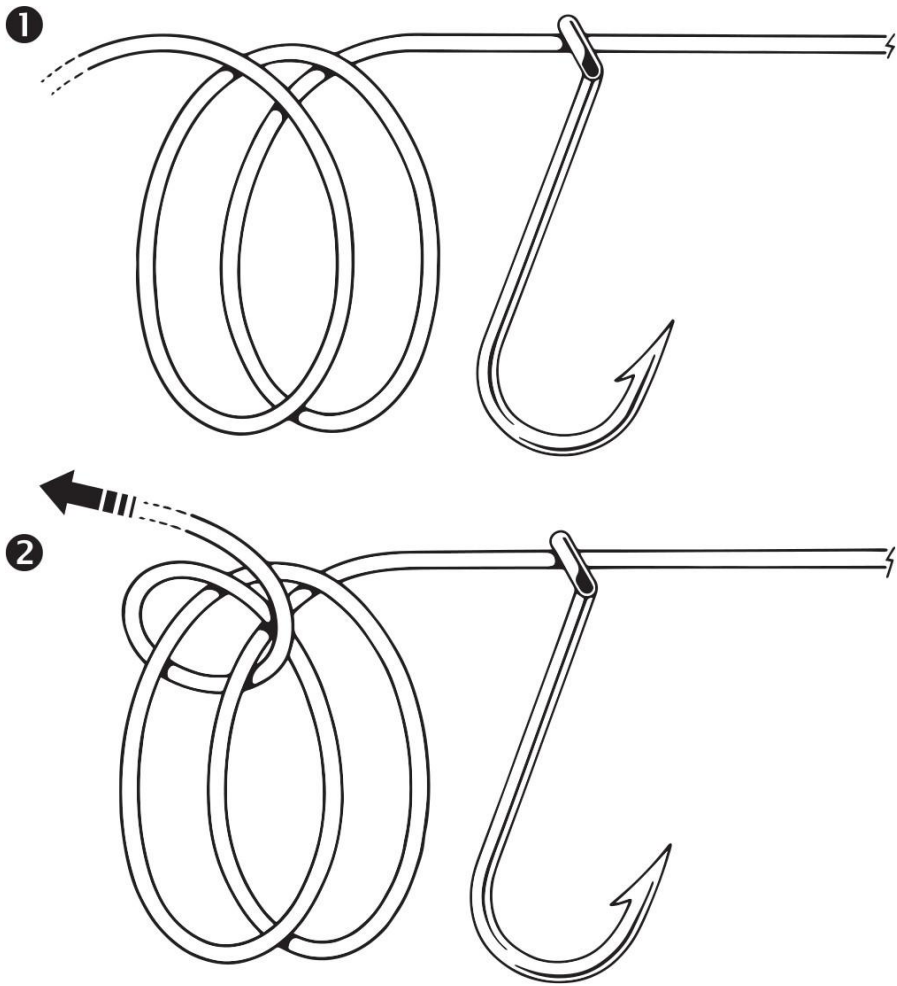
Exclusively for flies on hooks with up-turned or down-turned eyes, this simple but strong knot will keep the head of the fly in line with the cast, giving a more effective fly presentation.




Make two turns.
3
4
Pull the hook up through the loop, seat the knot correctly, and trim the knot end.
5

Double Turle Knot

This knot ties up slightly larger than the Improved Turle Knot (see p48) but is more secure. It also gives an excellent fly presentation. Like the Improved Turle Knot it is unsuitable for straight-eyed hooks.



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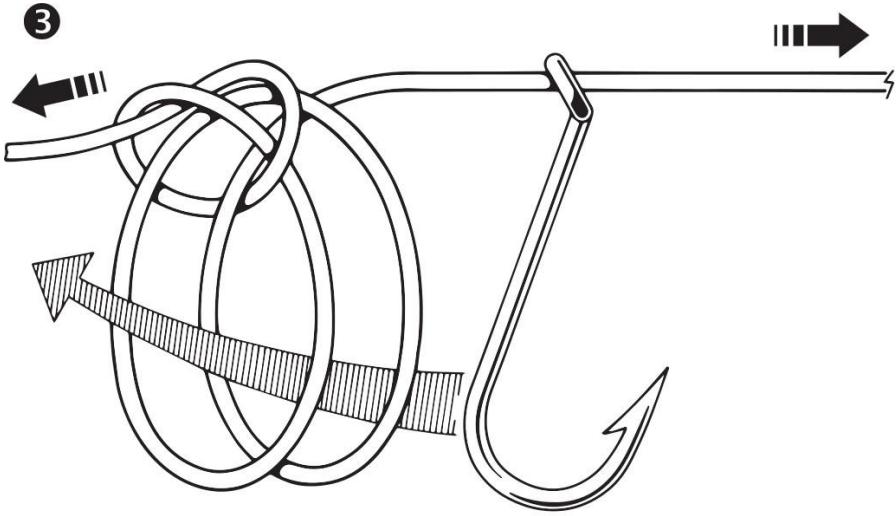
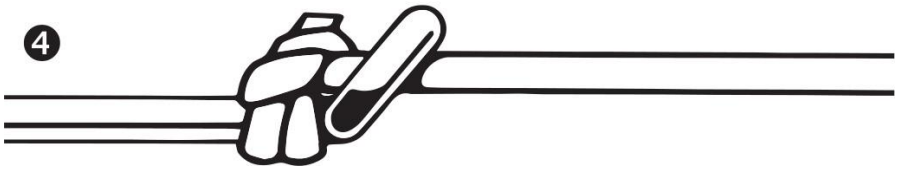


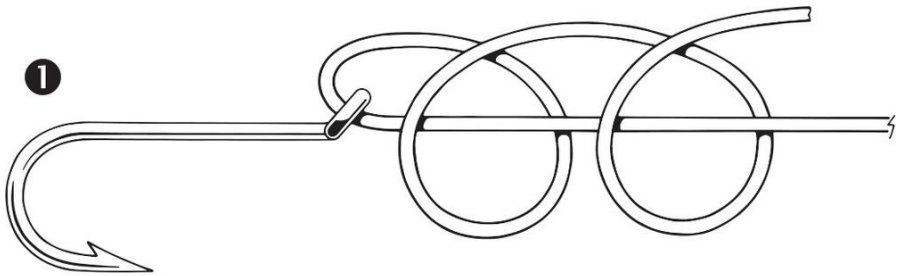
Pull the hook up through the two loops, seat the knot correctly, and trim the knot end.

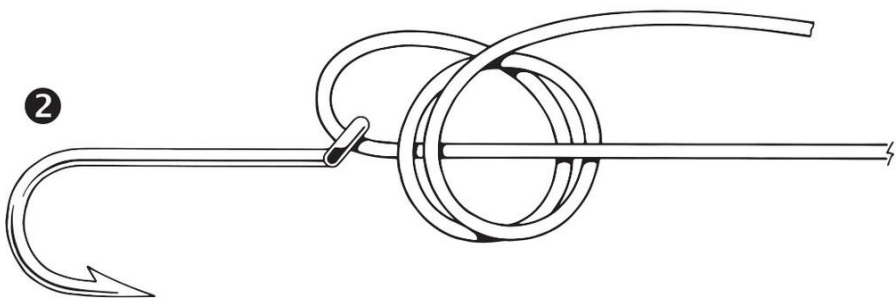
❹

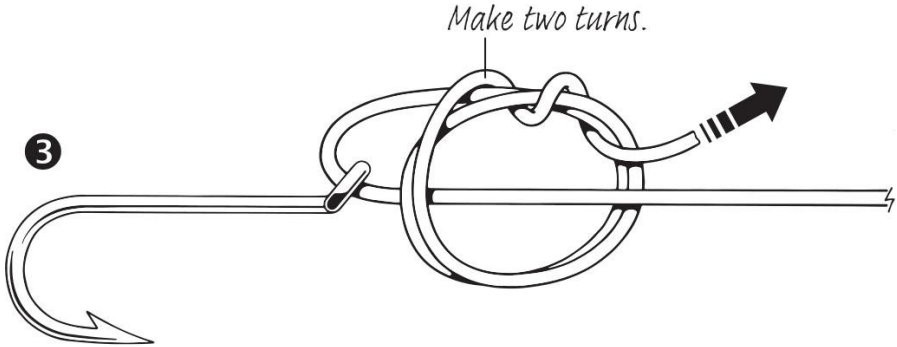


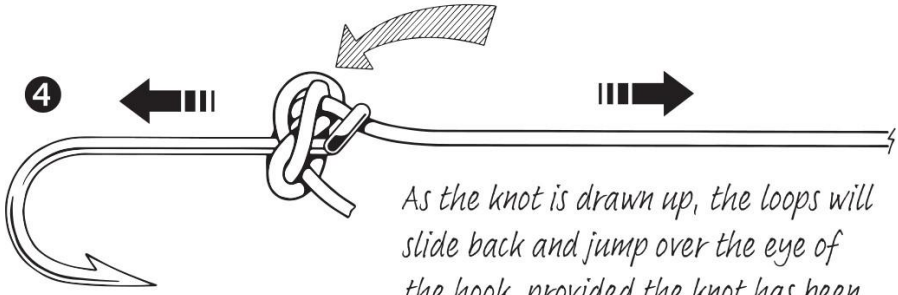
George Harvey Dry-Fly Knot

Developed specifically for dry flies on hooks with up-turned or down-turned eyes, this knot must be tied with care to successfully give the precise and delicate presentation that is so vital when dry fly fishing.

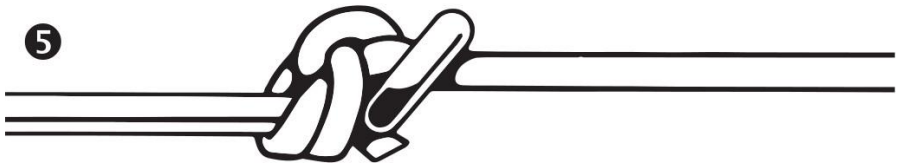






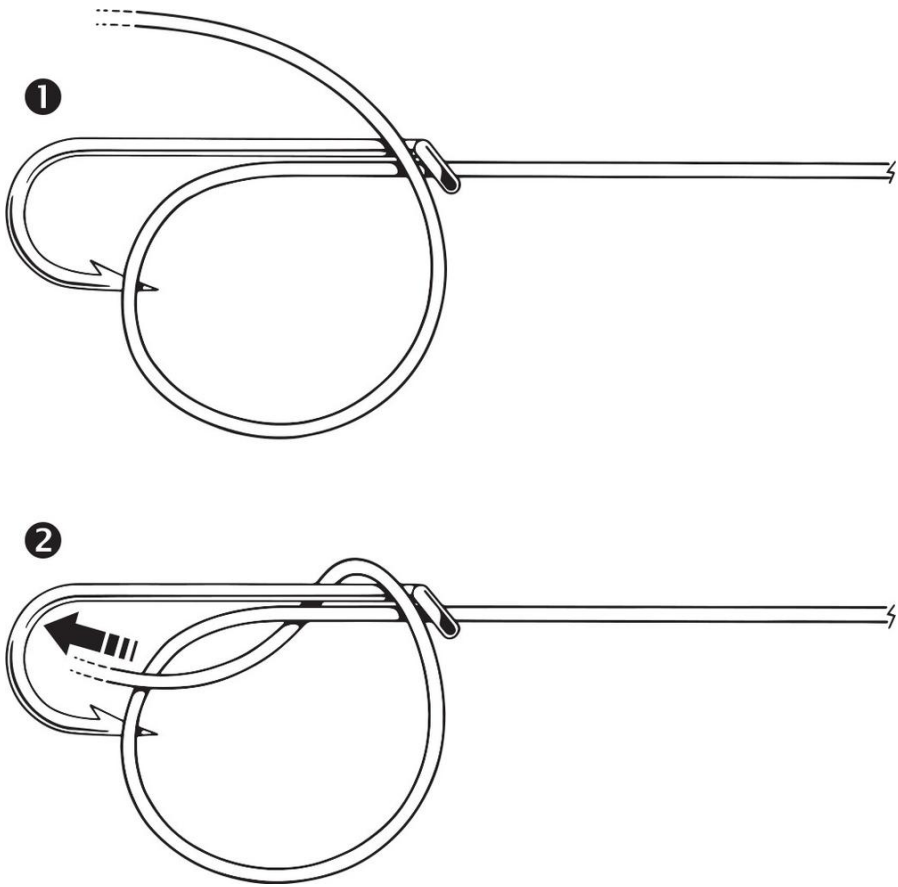


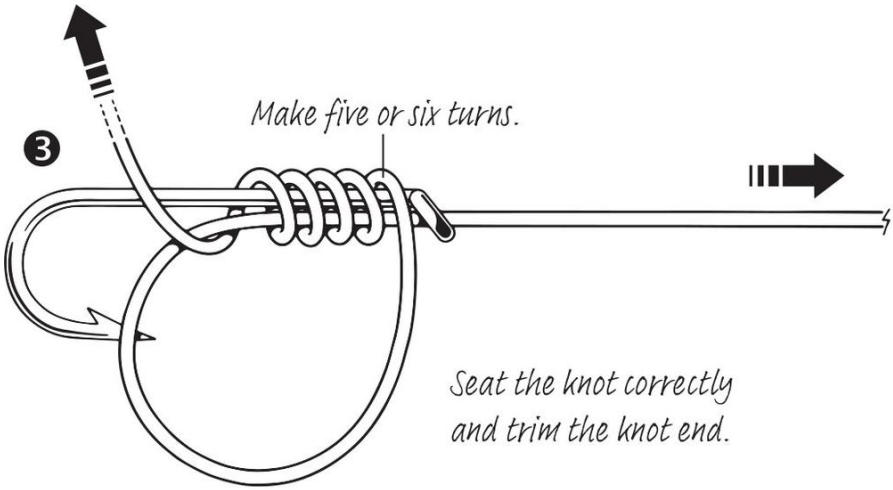
As the knot is drawn up, the loops will slide back and jump over the eye of the hook, provided the knot has been tied corectly. Seat the knot and trim the knot end.



Snelling an Eyed Hook

An easy but exceptionally strong method of attaching an eyed hook to a line, the Snell is widely used by saltwater fishermen.



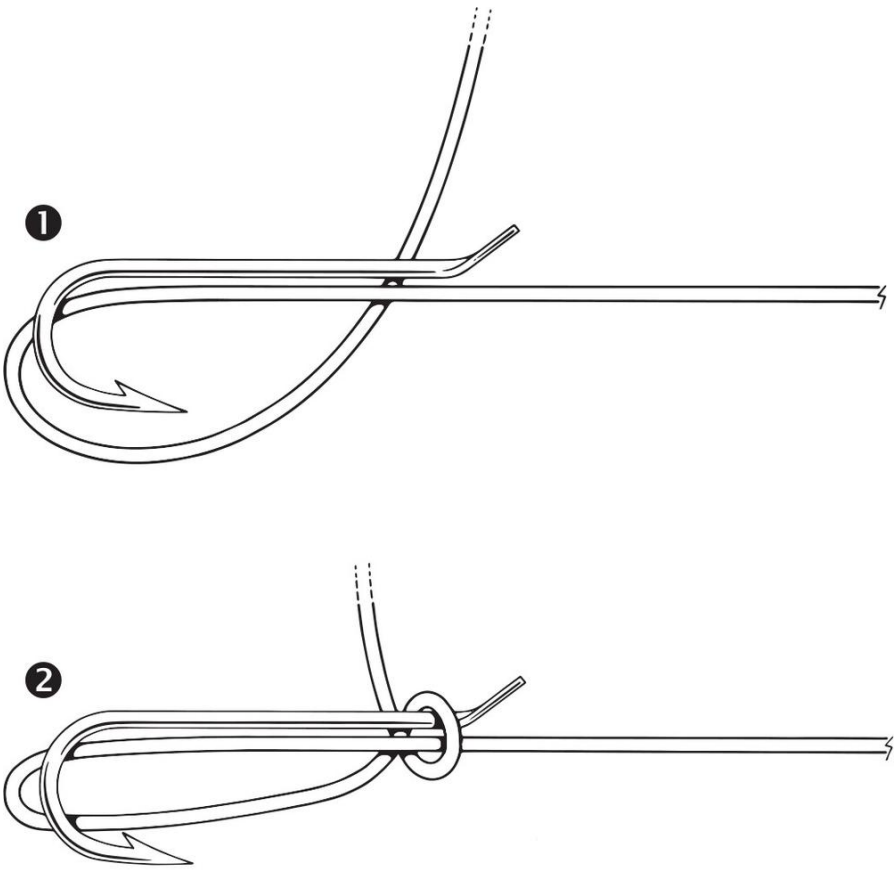


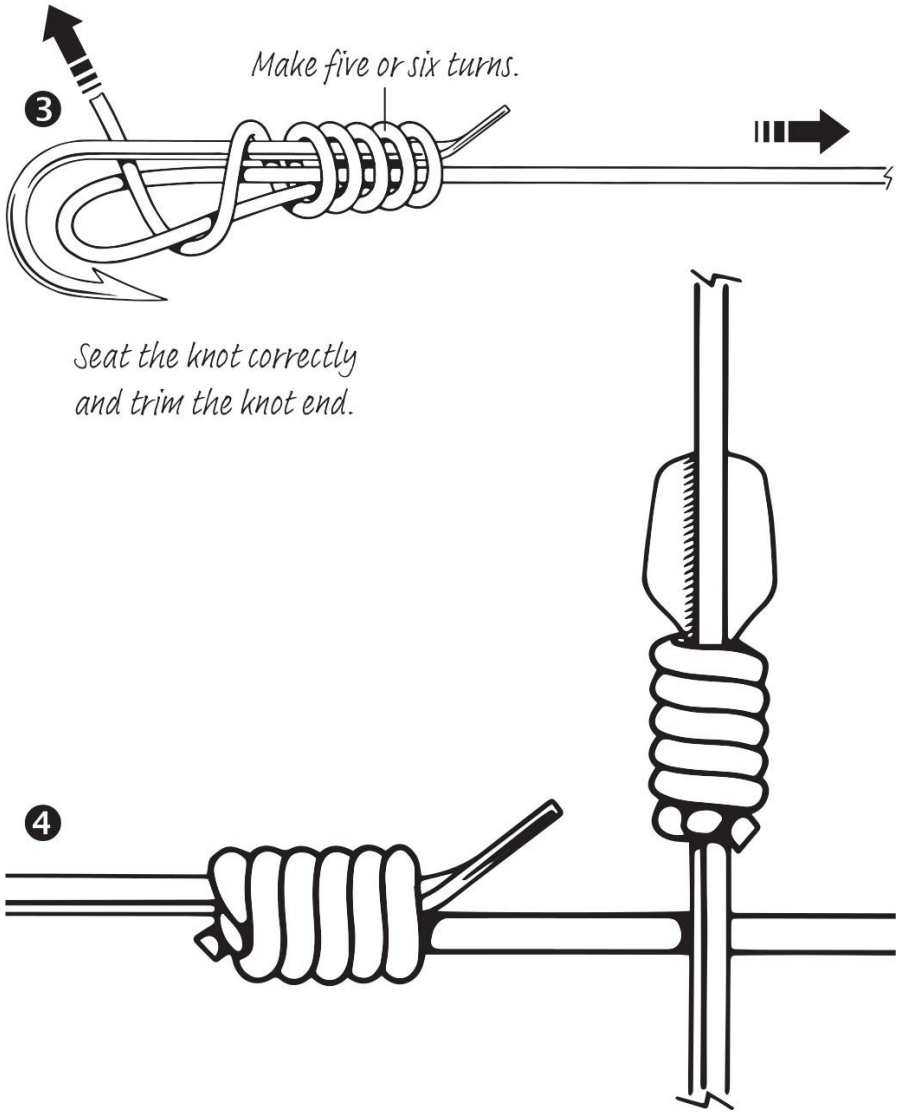
TYING TOOL AVAILABLE

SEE PAGE 60

Spade End Knot

Use this knot to attach hooks with a spade end as opposed to an eyed end. It is important to seat the knot correctly around the hook shank.



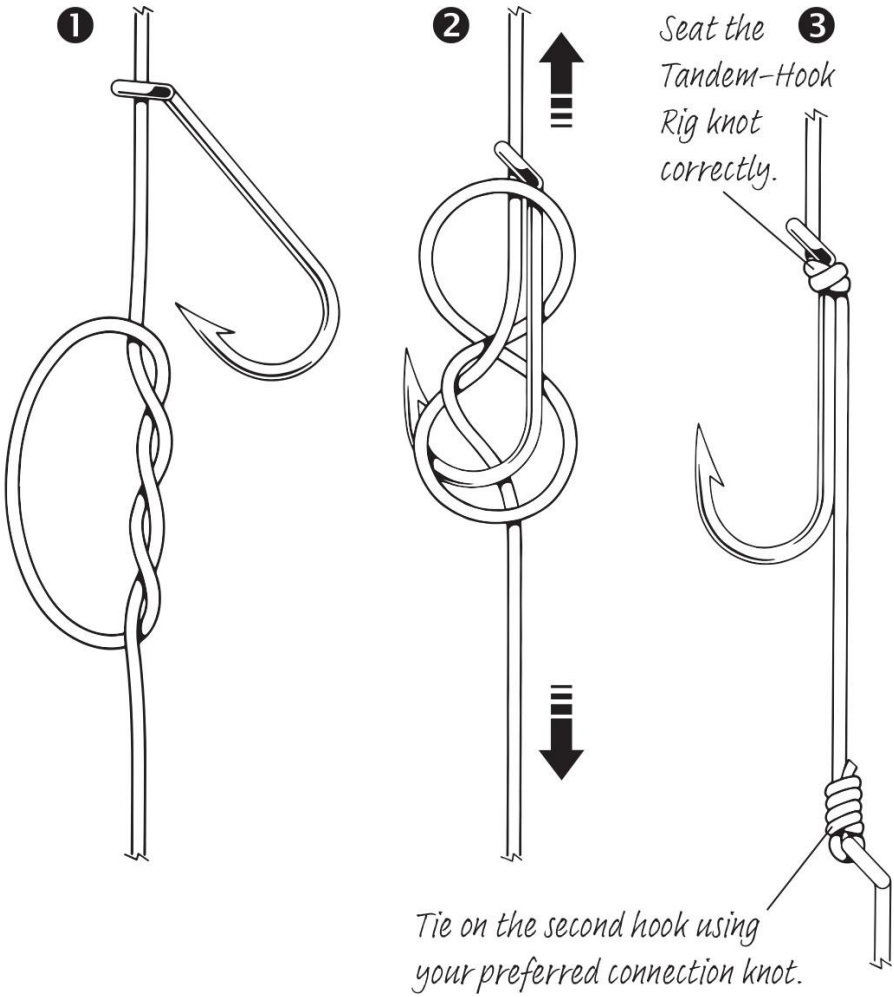


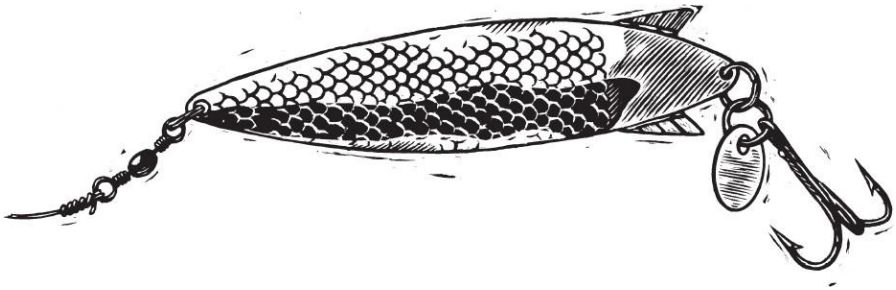
TYING TOOL AVAILABLE

SEE PAGE 60

Tandem-Hook Rig

If you need a second hook attached to your line – for example, using a tail hook when bait fishing – use this quick and easy Tandem-Hook Rig.





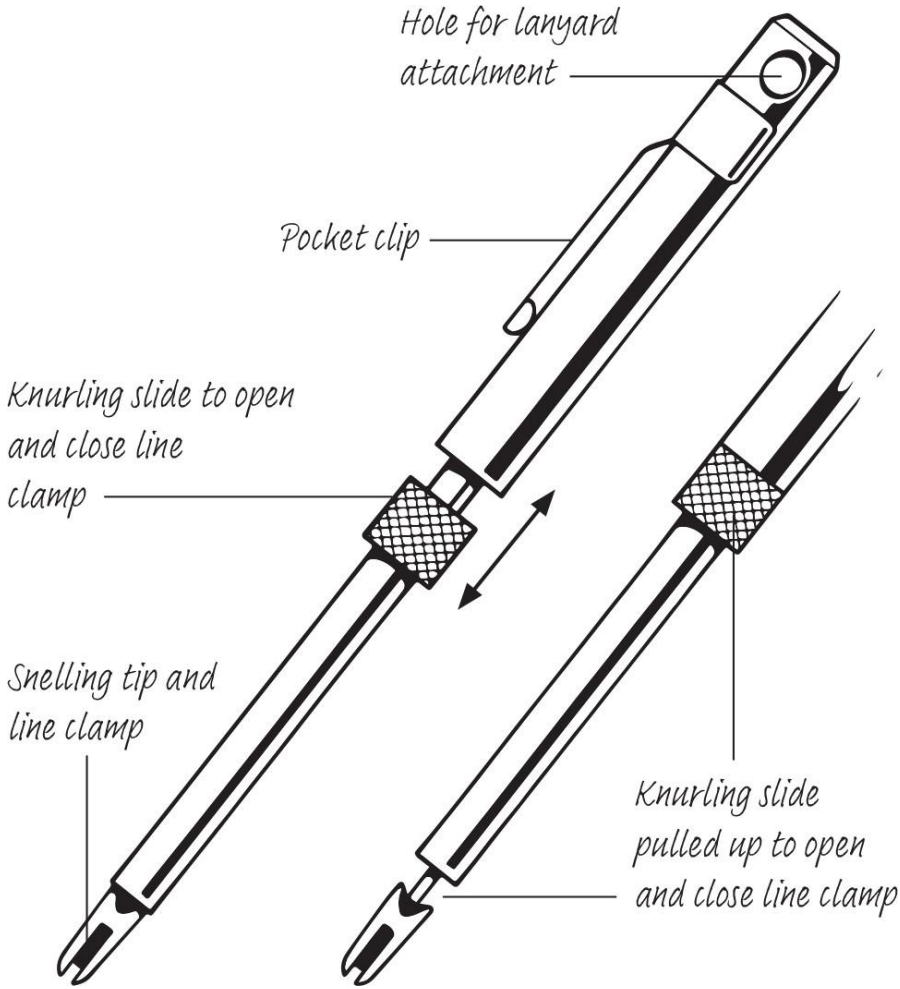
KNOT-TYING TOOLS

Knot tying can be a demanding task for some people, specially in adverse weather or lighting conditions. Or you may simply no longer have nimble fingers or perfect eyesight.

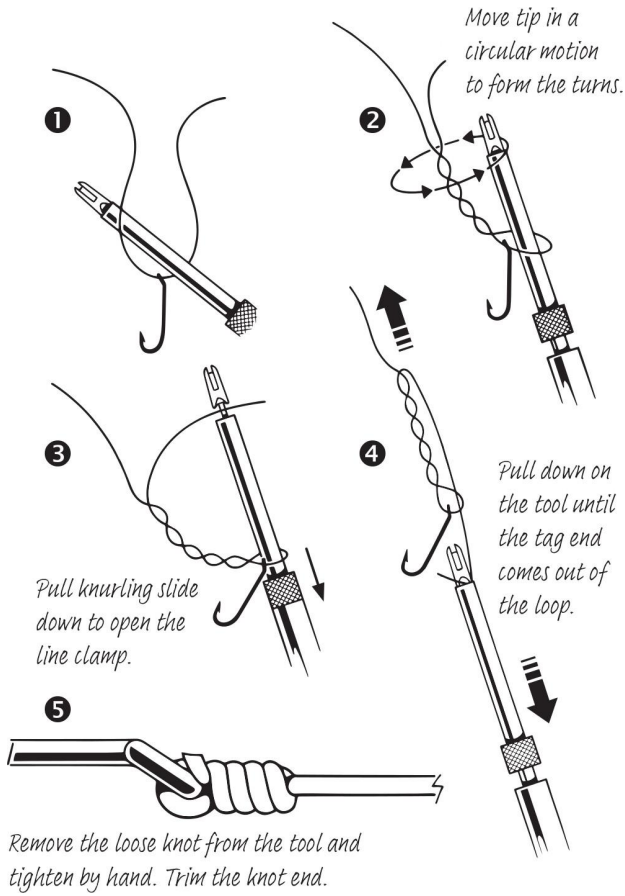
Three very useful knot-tying tools are featured in this section. Knot-tying tools can take a little time to master but if you need a little help tying a variety of knots, they can be very effective. They are available from fishing tackle shops or fishing mail-order companies.

Cinch Tie™ Knot Tyer

Made in the USA, this knot tyer tooled from solid brass will assist you with a variety of knots, including the Surgeon's Knot (see p18) and the Clinch Knot (see p40 for improved version). It is also equipped with a useful snelling tip (see p54 & 56).

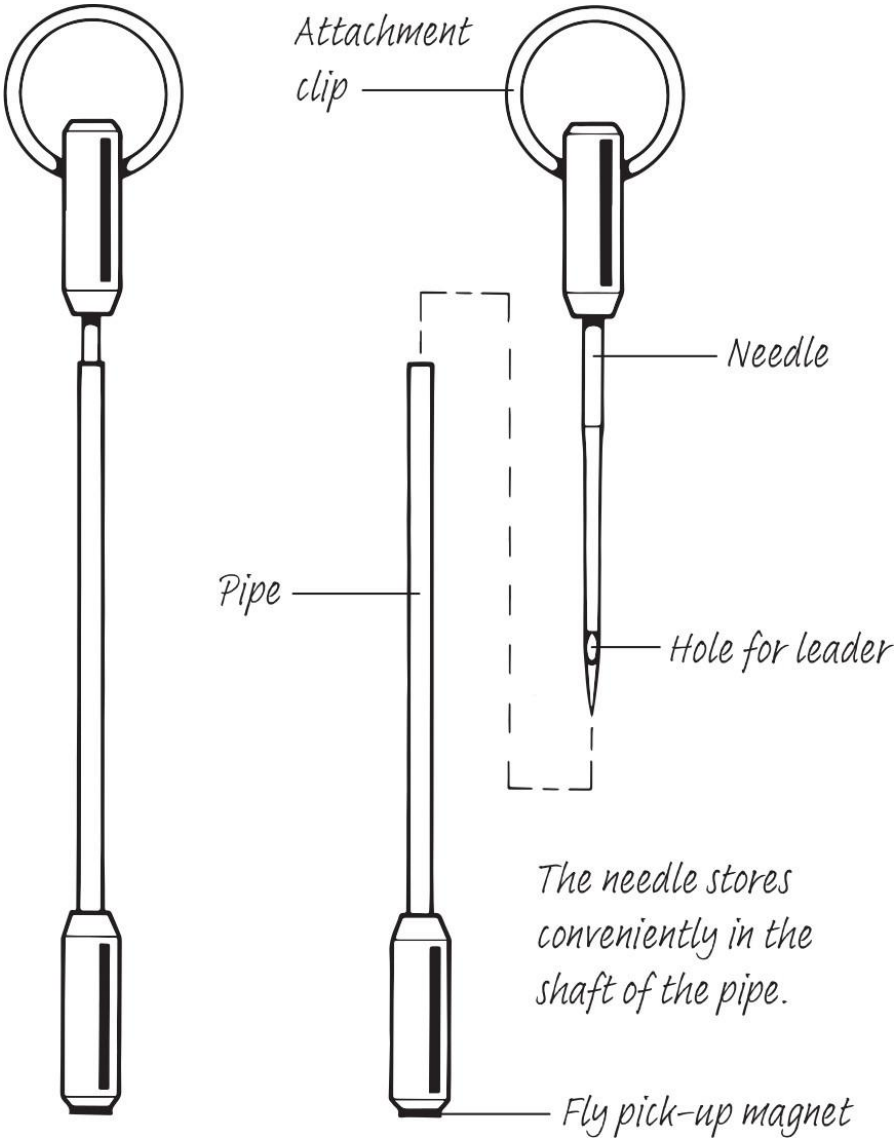

Hole for lanyard attachment
Pocket clip
Knurling slide to open and close line clamp
Snelling tip and line clamp
Knurling slide pulled up to open and close line clamp

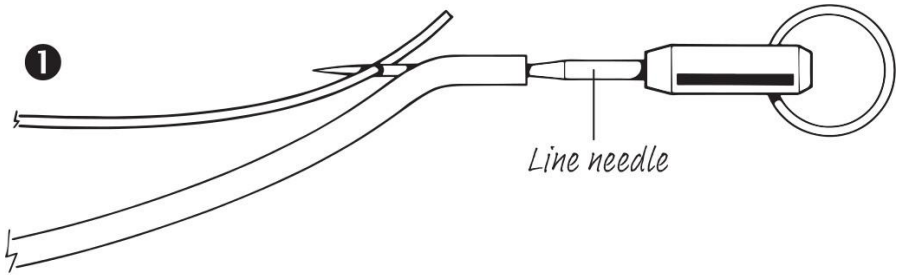
TYING THE CLINCH KNOT

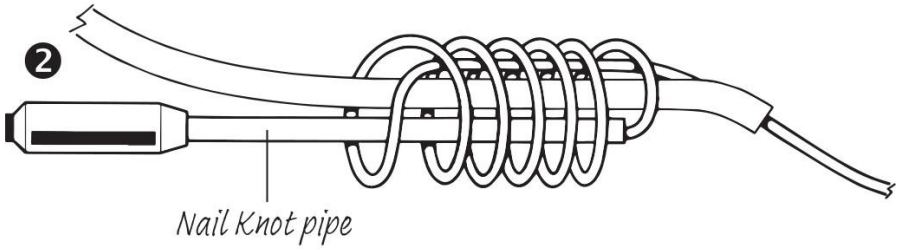

Move tip in a circular motion to form the turns.
1
2
3
4
5
Pull knurling slide down to open the line clamp.
Pull down on the tool until the tag end comes out of the loop.
Remove the loose knot from the tool and tighten by hand. Trim the knot end.

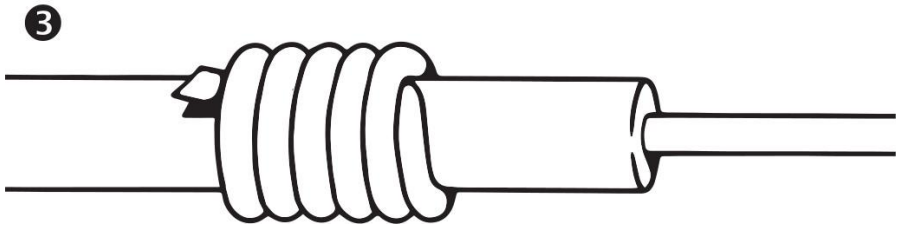
Nail Knot Pipe and Line Needle

This high-quality tool from Japan is designed to facilitate the often difficult procedure of tying the Nail Knot (see p30) and the Needle Knot (see p32).


Attachment clip
Needle
Pipe
Hole for leader
The needle stores conveniently in the shaft of the pipe.
Fly pick-up magnet


❶
Line needle


❷
Nail Knot pipe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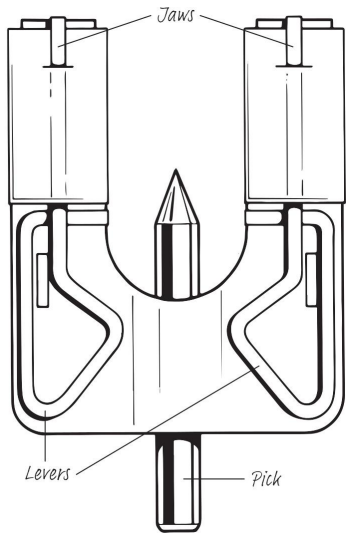
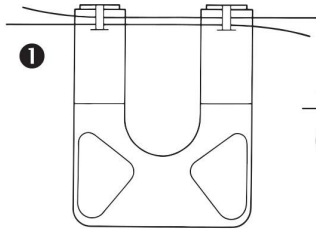
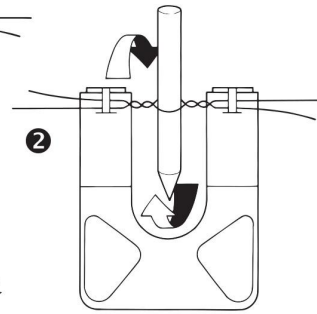
Blood Knot Tyer

This uncomplicated but well-made tool from the USA makes tying the Blood Knot (see p14) a very quick and easy process.

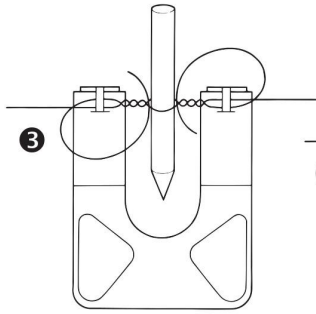




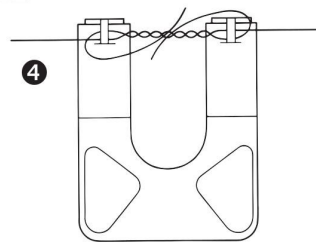
Insert the monofilament under the jaws by depressing the levers.



Insert the pick between the two strands and revolve.



Insert one free end of mono-filament upward through the gap alongside the pick and the other end downward.

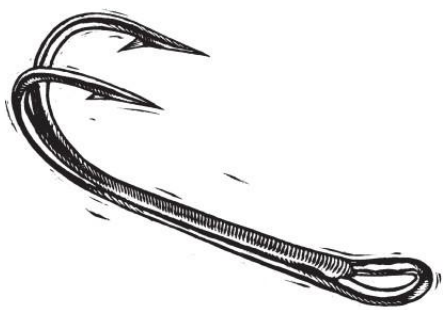


Remove the pick, then remove the loose knot by depressing the levers and tighten by hand.

OTHER LINE CONNECTORS

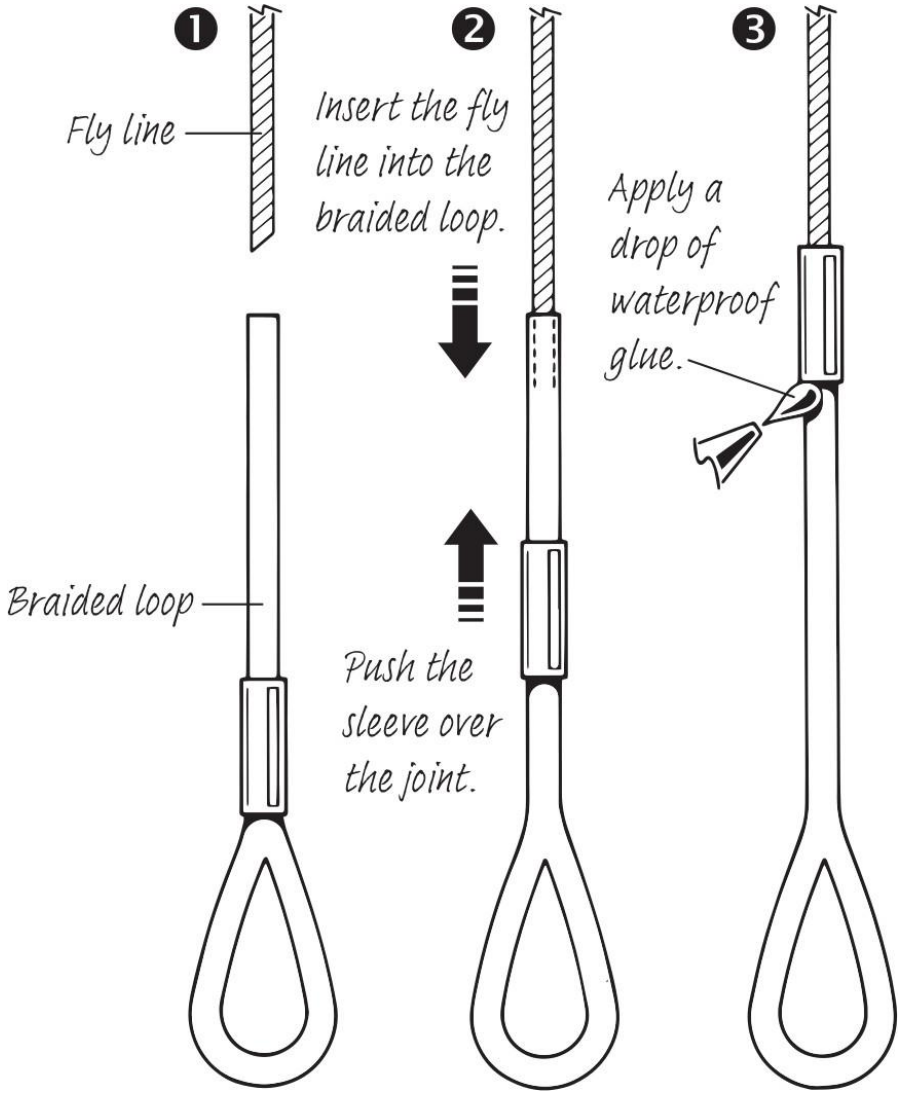
Sometimes there are alternatives to using knots as line connectors. This section looks at a variety of options.

All the options illustrated and described in this section are widely available from fishing tackle stores or fishing tackle mail-order companies, and they have all proved to be very effective and well worth considering.



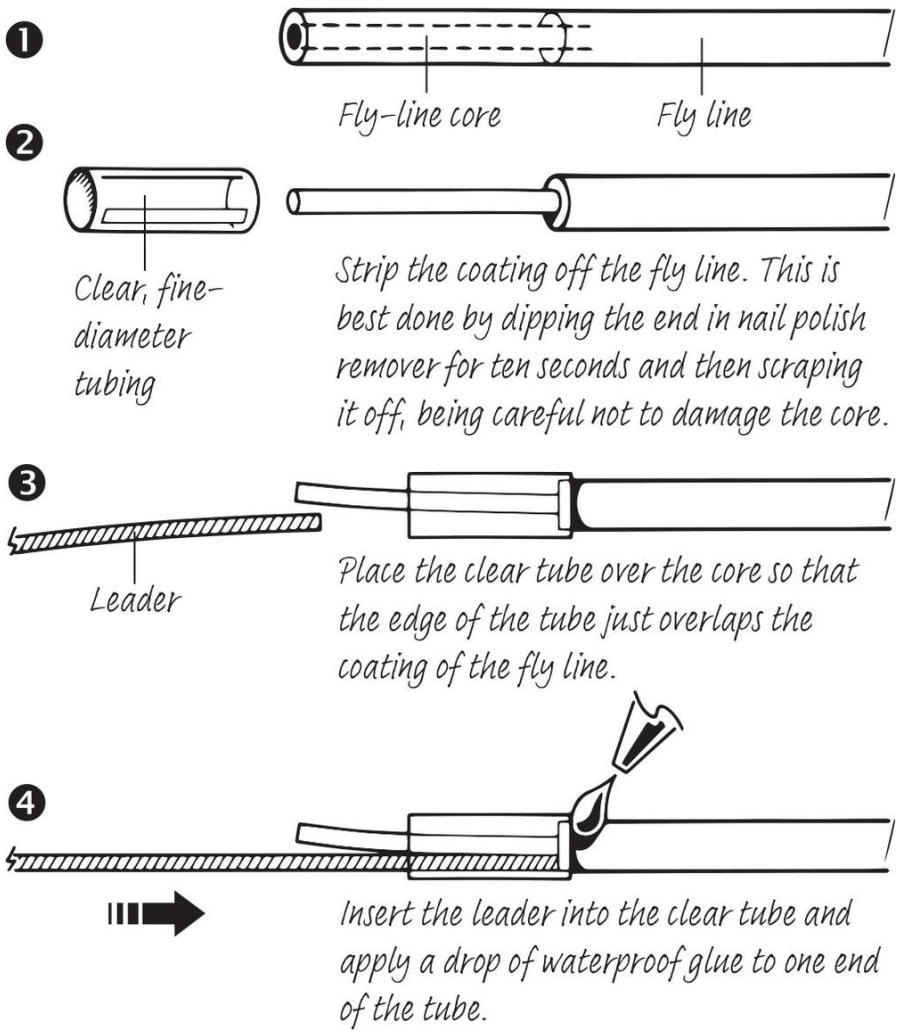
Braided Loops

These high-quality braided loops are fixed to the end of a fly line to provide a neat and strong loop-to-loop connection with the leader. Once fixed, the braided loop makes changing the leader a quick and easy process.

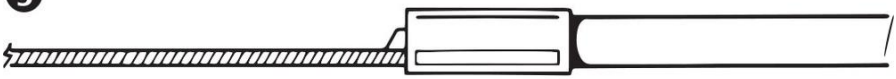

1
2
3
Fly line
Insert the fly line into the braided loop.
Apply a drop of waterproof glue.
Braided loop
Push the sleeve over the joint.

Tube Joints

Tube joints are joints made between fly lines and leaders or fly lines and backing using a short piece of clear, fine-diameter tubing and low-viscosity waterproof glue.


1
Fly-line core
Fly line
2
Clear, fine-diameter tubing
Strip the coating off the fly line. This is best done by dipping the end in nail polish remover for ten seconds and then scraping it off, being careful not to damage the core.
3
Leader
Place the clear tube over the core so that the edge of the tube just overlaps the coating of the fly line.
4
Insert the leader into the clear tube and apply a drop of waterproof glue to one end of the tube.

❺

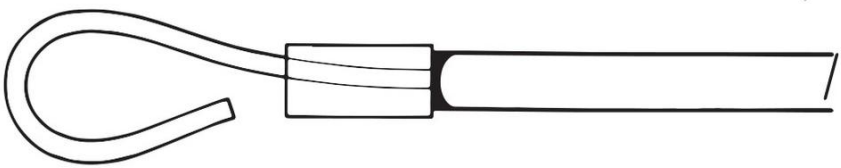


Leave for a few minutes to set and then trim off the loose ends.

MAKING A LOOP IN THE END OF YOUR FLY LINE

Expose a longer piece of the core and turn it back on itself to form a loop. Then follow the same instructions as for joining the single leader line.

❶



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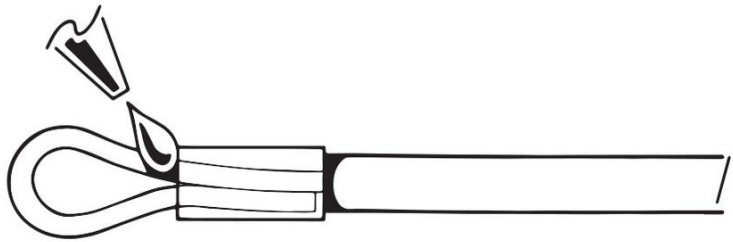

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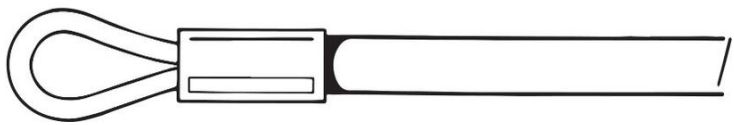
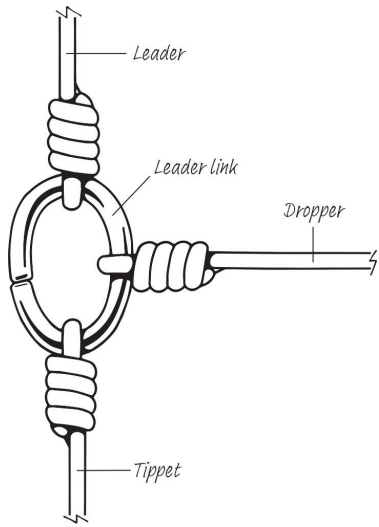


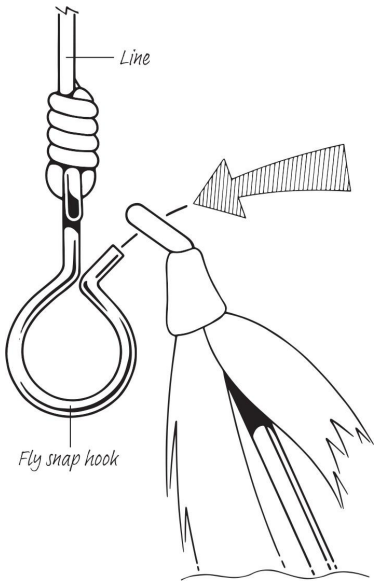
Leader Links

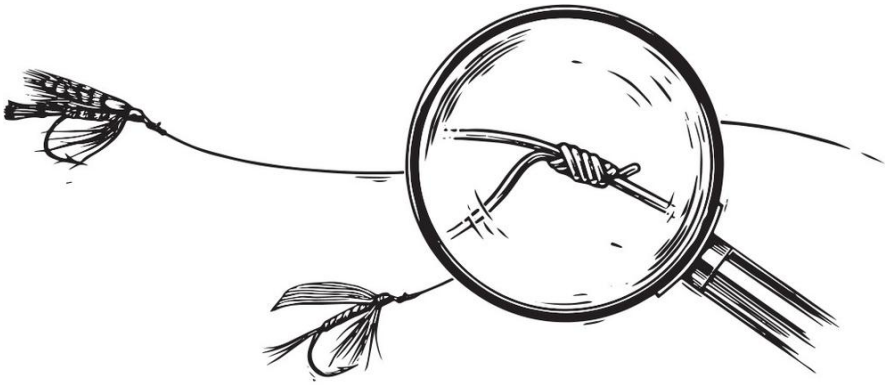
Leader links are tiny but very strong sterling silver rings made in the USA. Tie a link to the end of your leader and then attach your tippet to the link. The links weigh so little that they don't affect turnover or the leader's floating/sinking properties – plus you can regularly change your tippet without affecting your leader. They are also ideal for tying droppers to a leader.



Fly Snap Hooks

These very effective connectors made in Norway allow you to quickly change your fly without wasting time retying the fly to your line. They are available in a variety of sizes to suit different-sized hooks.





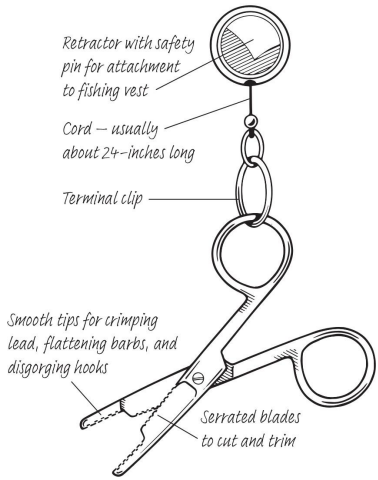
AND FINALLY…

Here are some items of equipment that are essential and some items that every well-equipped fisherman should seriously consider.

As most fishermen know there is an endless list of fishing accessories and gadgets – some useful and some not so useful. The items illustrated and described in this section, all available from fishing tackle shops and mail-order fishing companies, will significantly help you to tie neat and efficient knots.

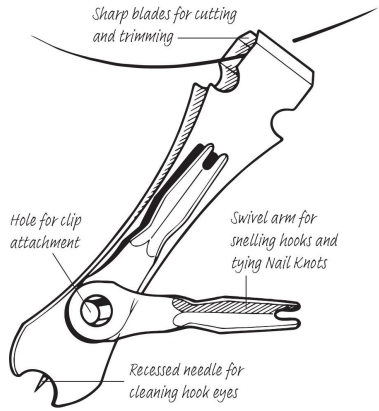
Scissor Pliers and Retractors

A pair of good-quality scissor pliers is an essential piece of equipment for all fishermen. To tie any knot, you will have to first cut the line and then trim the knot ends. This versatile tool will do that, but it will also crimp lead, flatten barbs, and remove hooks. To keep your scissor pliers within quick and easy reach, attach them to a retractor that is secured to your fishing vest.


Retractor with safety pin for attachment to fishing vest
Cord — usually about 24-inches long
Terminal clip
Smooth tips for crimping lead, flattening barbs, and disgorging hooks
Serrated blades to cut and trim

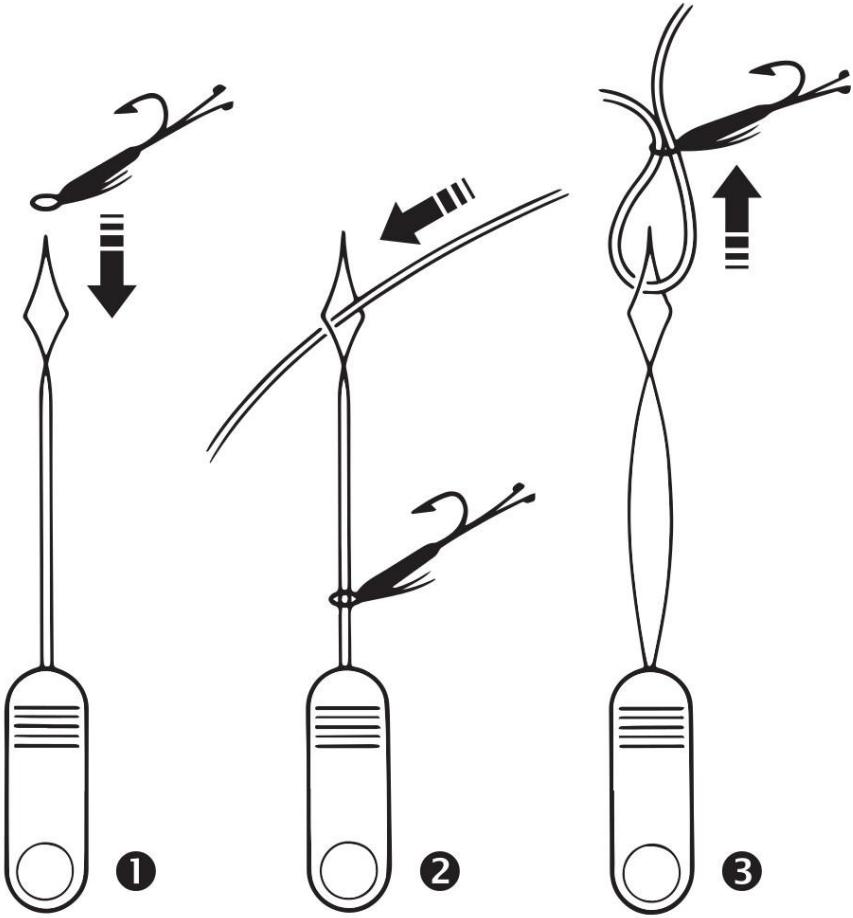
Nip 'N Knot™ Clippers

An alternative to scissors are line clippers. There are many variations of clippers available so it is worth considering one that does more than just cut line. For example, the Nip 'N Knot, made in the USA, includes a useful recessed, sharp needle for cleaning hook eyes, and a swivel arm that can be used to snell hooks and tie Nail Knots.


Sharp blades for cutting and trimming
Hole for clip attachment
Swivel arm for snelling hooks and tying Nail Knots
Recessed needle for cleaning hook eyes

Fly Threader

A fly threader is designed to assist threading the eye of even the smallest fly-fishing hook onto the tippet. This fly threader, made in Japan, comes as part of a specially designed fly box so you can preload your flies at home (in good light) ready for threading onto the tippet while you are fishing.



Load fly onto the threader.

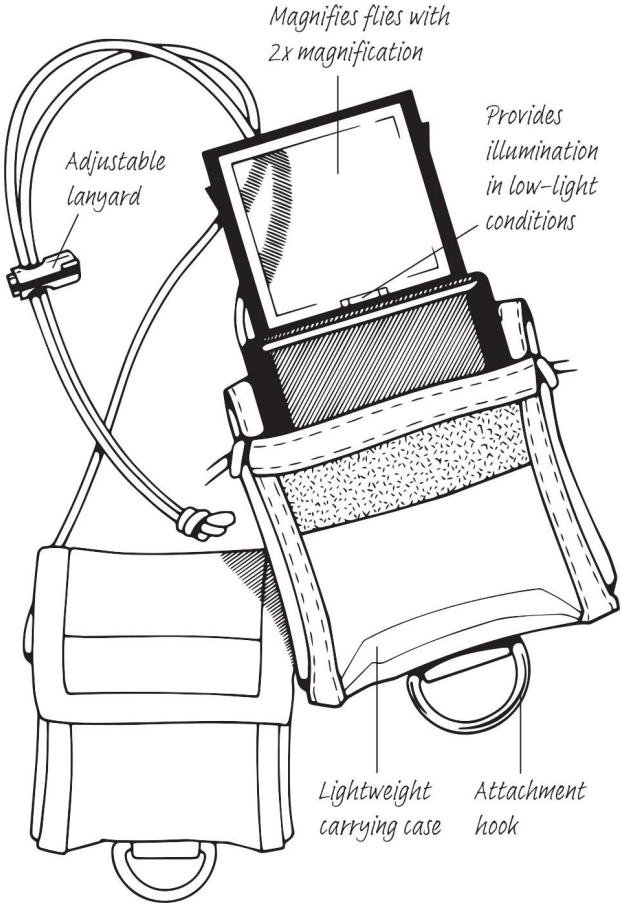
Insert tippet through threader.

Gently lift the fly up to thread onto the tippet.

Guide Light Magnifier

Fishing knots tied with fine monofilament line are very small, so tying them under magnification, especially while fishing, is a big advantage. This fisherman's guide light magnifier, made in the USA, allows you to do just that. It is lightweight and rests comfortably on your chest, leaving both hands free, and if needed it will provide illumination in low-light conditions.

Rests comfortably on chest while tying flies or tippets.


Magnifies flies with 2x magnification
Provides illumination in low-light conditions
Adjustable lanyard
Lightweight carrying case
Attachment hook

GLOSSARY

Backing Line High-breaking-strain monofilament or braided line used under the fly line on a reel to bulk out the spool. Also used as additional line when the fly line is stripped off the reel by a big fish making a long run.

Braided Line Line manufactured by interweaving several strands of material.

Butt The thicker part of the leader, usually monofilament, that is attached to the fly line.

Fly Line A coated nylon, Dacron, or PVC line specifically developed to cast an artificial fly attached to a leader.

Head of Fly The front part of the fly, immediately behind the eye of the hook.

Leader The tapered length of nylon that forms the connection between a fly line and a fly.

Line A term to describe all types and sizes of fishing line.

Lure A term to describe artificial baits.

Monofilament Strong and flexible single-strand nylon line.

Retractor A spring-loaded spool of cord, usually pinned to clothing, to attach items such as scissors.

Seat/Seated A term to describe the process of knot formation.

Snell To tie a hook by wrapping line around the shank or straight part of the hook.

Swivel An item of tackle that prevents twists in the line.

Tippet The thin terminal section of the leader, to which the fly is tied.

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NOTES

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